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**Art History as Janus:
Sergei Eisenstein on the Visual Arts**

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**Hanin Hannouch
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The dissertation of Hanin Hannouch is approved

Program Coordinator: Emanuele Pellegrini, IMT School for Advanced Studies

Advisor: Linda Bertelli, IMT School for Advanced Studies

Co-Advisor: Alessia Cervini, Universita' degli Studi di Messina

The dissertation of Hanin Hannouch has been reviewed by:

Prof. Pietro Montani, Sapienza Universita di Roma

Dr. Marie Rebecchi, University of Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle 3

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ARTS**

CONTENTS

LIST OF IMAGES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VITA AND PUBLICATIONS

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Ausblick: Cinematic Paintings- Case Studies

I – VALENTIN SEROV

- 1 Yermolova
- 1.1 Mirror in the set-up

- 1.2 Dynamic light
- 2 Seeing intraconceptual movement
- 3 Art history answers back
- 3.1 Vanishing points and diagonals

II- EL GRECO

- 4 The Expulsion of the Moneylenders from the Temple
- 4.1 Unecstatic
- 4.2 Mechanical repetition
- 5 The Resurrection from the Grave
- 5.1 Format
- 5.2 Theme
- 5.3 Pathos and ecstasy
- 6 An art historical transformation
- 7 Storm over Toledo
- 7.1 Level of subjectivity
- 7.2 28 mm painting

8 Art historical comparison between Storm over Toledo and View and Plan of Toledo

III- GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI

- 9 Carcere with Staircase
- 9.1 Independent value
- 9.2 Biographical change
- 9.3 Accumulation of perspective
- 10 Art History Looks at The Dark Prison and Carcere with Staircase

Rückblick: Eisenstein's art historical references

- 11 Hugo Kehrers *Die Kunst des Grecos*
- 12 Intersections between Eisenstein and Kehrers
 - 12.1 Spirituality of Storm over Toledo
 - 12.2 Cadre introductif of The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice
- 13 Jean-Martin Charcot's *Les Démoniaques dans l'art*
 - 13.1 Saint Nilus
- 14 Intersections between Eisenstein and Charcot
 - 14.1 Hysteric Spanish art
 - 14.2 Location of hysteria
- 15 Typologies of ecstasy
 - 15.1 Ecstasy within the image
 - 15.2 Ecstasy as meta-image
 - 15.3 Ecstasy in the whole and in the part
- 16 Eisenstein's drawings: From hysteria to ecstasy
- 17 Albert Giesecke's *Meister der Grafik: Giovanni Battista Piranesi*
- 18 Intersections between Eisenstein and Giesecke
 - 18.1 Carcerei and "Urcarceri"
 - 18.2 Movement and frame
 - 18.3 Literary interpretations of Carceri

CONCLUSION

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

List of illustrations

- Ill.1: My drawing of vanishing points and diagonals in Valentin Serov's Portrait of Maria Yermolova (1905).
- Ill.2: El Greco, Expulsion from the temple aka Christ driving the traders from the temple, ca.1600, Oil on Canvas, 106.3 x 129.7 cm, National Gallery (London).
- Ill. 3: El Greco, Resurrection, ca. 1596/1600, Oil on Canvas, 275 x 127 cm, Museo del Prado (Madrid).
- Ill.4: Group 1: Jesus in Expulsion (left) and Resurrection (right).
- Ill.5: Group 2: Man in yellow cloak in Expulsion (left) and Resurrection (right).
- Ill.6: Group 3: Old man and young man in Expulsion (left) and Resurrection (right).
- Ill.7: Group 4: The masses in Expulsion (left) and Resurrection (right).
- Ill.8: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, The Dark Prison, etching from "Opere Varie", ca. 1750.
- Ill.9: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Le Carceri d'Invenzione aka Carcere with Staircase, Etching, Second Edition, ca. 1761, Museum Berggruen (part of Eisenstein's collection).
- Ill.10: My interpretation of Carcere with Staircase.
- Ill.11: Ecstasy as meta-image in Espolio, The Pentecost, The Resurrection.

Ill.12: El Greco's Laocoon with the movement in the modelé and the body outlines highlighting it.

Ill.13: Jesus' face from Espolio (left) and the Possessed of Rubens' face (right).

Ill. 14: Apostle 1 from The Resurrection (left), Bell's opisthotonos (center), and Richer's drawing from the periode de clownisme (right).

Ill.15: Apostle 3 from The Resurrection (above) and the contorted body from Richer's periode de clownisme below).

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VITA

January 1, 1989	Born, Beirut, Lebanon
2009	BA: Archaeology and Art History Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik Jounieh, Lebanon
2011	MA: Modern Art Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik Jounieh, Lebanon
2013	International Masters in Art History and Museology (IMKM) Ecole du Louvre Paris, France
2014	International Masters in Art History and Museology (IMKM) Universität Heidelberg Heidelberg, Germany

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS (selection)

Hannouch (2015), *We Have Always Been Cinematic - Sergei Eisenstein as Art*. Paper presented at the Second International Forum for doctoral candidates in East European art history. Humboldt- Universität zu Berlin, Germany.

Hannouch (2015), *Cinematism and Formalism: Sergei Eisenstein as Art Historian*. Paper presented at Russian Art: Building Bridges Between East and West. Jacobs University Bremen, Germany.

Hannouch (2017), *The Agitated Eye of the Film Viewer : Sergei Eisenstein as Art Historian*. Paper presented at Une histoire du regard est-elle possible ? Le cinéma au cœur de la « culture visuelle ». Université de Lorraine – Nancy, France.

Hannouch (2017), *Cinematic Etchings? Sergei Eisenstein, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, and Postmodernism*. Paper presented at XXIV Udine International Film Studies Conference. Università degli Studi di Udine, Italy.

Hannouch (2017), *Art History as Janus: Sergei Eisenstein on the Visual Arts*. Paper presented at International Conference on Moving Image and Philosophy. University of Porto, Portugal.

Hannouch (2016), *The Trouble With Alexander Medvedkin: Ideological Errors in New Moscow (1938)*, In: Slovo, UCL (London), Vol.28, No.1, p.21-37.

Hannouch (2016). *A Cinematographer's Guide to Literature! Sergei Eisenstein's Cinematism and Visual Writing*, In: the image in the World, the World in the image New perspectives for an interdisciplinary approach to textual and extra-textual representation, Quaderni della ricerca, Università L'Orientale di Napoli.

Hannouch (2016). *Accélérer la machine: La voiture de course au cinéma*, In: Ecrire l'histoire, Université Denis Diderot Paris-7, CNRS.

ABSTRACT

My dissertation deals with the connection between cinema and art history, and their respective ways of looking upon artworks, exemplified by the writings of Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) on the visual arts.

In the first part of my work, I focus on four of Eisenstein's texts dealing with three painters he considers cinematic: "Yermolova" (1937) studying Valentin Serov's portrait of Maria Yermolova, "El Greco" (1937) and "El Greco y el Cine" (written between 1939 and 1941) considering the Cretan painter Doménikos Theotokópoulos, and lastly "Piranesi or the Fluidity of Form" (undated, presumably 1947) analyzing Giovanni Battista Piranesi's etchings. Eisenstein reads in the present, artworks taken from the past, in order to re-imagine them in the future through cinema. It is this tension that I expose by reshaping the content of these articles around key concepts or around the paintings constitutive of Eisenstein's arguments, which I scrutinize in the context of his own film theory. I also provide a parallel art historical interpretation to them.

In the second part of my work, I examine Eisenstein's art historical sources, highlighting the extent of his reliance on Hugo Kehr, Albert Giesecke, and Jean-Martin Charcot. I outline the circulation of ideas between them, and how they impact his overall approach to the visual arts and his conceptualization of the presence of compositional factors that enable the operation of cinema in static media.

ART HISTORY AS JANUS

SERGEI EISENSTEIN ON THE VISUAL ARTS

Introduction

Eisenstein on the visual arts: Research question

How does the arrival of the moving image change the way we write about and perceive art history?

In what way does the act of being a film spectator *today* alter our interpretation of artworks of the *past*, especially those preceding the cinema?

What is the role of Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) in the history of art history?

These questions are at the center of my exploration of the connection between cinema and art history, and their respective ways of looking upon artworks, exemplified by the writings of Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) on the visual arts. This dissertation initiates a dialog, not between specific films and their quotations of paintings, but between a film director and his creation of an art historical paradigm which was the fruit of a long intellectual preoccupation.

Art history as Janus: Method

Throughout the process of elaborating this research, I employ an image which Eisenstein described towards the end of his life in his book *Nonindifferent Nature* that encapsulates his own method of formulating the history of the arts, as well as my own approach to analyzing him: "They (phenomena in art) most of all resemble the two-faced Janus of antiquity. For one face of theirs- the creator artist – looks powerfully into the future, and the other face – the preacher and teacher – is

turned to the past, to what has been overcome, experienced, to what has hopelessly vanished – and to see the features of the imagined golden age of the future."¹

The two faces of the Roman god Janus operate as a symbol of Eisenstein's dual tendency of approaching the arts which he had also mentioned in the 1930s: Rückblick (looking back) and Ausblick (looking forward)². Seen through this double lens, his gesture towards the artists he considers is an attempt to read in the present, an artwork painting taken from the past, in order to re-imagine it in the future through cinema. This exchange between cinema and art history, past and future, likewise traverses my work as a comparative methodology.

Similarly to Eisenstein, in the first part of my dissertation, I look both forward and back: I look forward by scrutinizing Eisenstein's use of cinema as an interpretative tool to analyze paintings and etchings. I look back towards art history by providing a parallel interpretation of these artworks that may be competing or complementary to Eisenstein's. I put him in dialog with an iconographic take on the paintings that he examines, focusing on the construction of the composition, the artists' use of color, and the representation of space.

My objective with this confrontation is not to correct Eisenstein's views and point out his mistakes, but rather to elucidate his stance towards his object of consideration, questioning whether his interpretation outweighs what is presented in the image, or if it relies on that very image. I delimit what part of his analysis is speculation and what part of it is

- 1 Sergei Eisenstein, "The Music of Landscape," in: *Nonindifferent Nature*, ed. Herbert Marshall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 369.
- 2 Antonio Somaini, "Eisenstein's Media Archaeology," in: *Notes for a General History of Cinema*, ed. Naum Kleiman, Antonio Somaini, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam university press, 2016), 23.

historical study, if he dreams up specific ideas and then finds pictures to embody them, or if he starts from pictures and then interprets them. This approach, I contend, is essential to fathoming the complex relationship between representation and cinematic interpretation for him within the context of 20th century historiography.

Field of investigation

The premise of this study is the focus on Eisenstein as a writer invested in the visual arts although, he was preoccupied with several, and at times overlapping, themes such as theater, physiology, anthropology etc., in parallel or not to working on his films³.

The time frame which this selection covers stretches from 1937 until 1947 (?)⁴; a decade marked by the Stalinist political Purges which culminated in 1937 in the "Great Terror", along with WWII, all of which resulted in a substantial body of aborted projects by Eisenstein⁵, and in a

3 Ian Christie, introduction to *Eisenstein Rediscovered*, ed. by Ian Christie, Richard Taylor (London and New York: Routledge, 1993),14.

4 Eisenstein's article on Piranesi is undated but is assumed to be from 1947.

5 The amount of incomplete, shelved, and censored films produced by Sergei Eisenstein from 1929 until 1938, reveals not only a set of misfortunes that befell the filmmaker in the USA and in Mexico, but also, upon his return to the Soviet Union, a deadly machinery of political and artistic Purges that cleansed socialist realist ideology not only of counter-revolutionary saboteurs, but also the film industry of remaining formalist aesthetics. Within the logic of this double attack, film censorship mirrored the Party's bureaucratic process of eliminating the "enemies of the people" by shelving films that were precisely

series of compelling questions around the relationship between the cinema, the visual arts and their history, which he articulated during his time in the USA, Mexico, and the Soviet Union, Eisenstein wrote prolifically about the visual arts: "From a very early stage his intellectual and speculative interests had a momentum of their own, increasingly independent of his film projects. The fact his studies undoubtedly provided some consolation amid the aborted projects and productions of the 1930s did not necessarily mean they embodied the same ideas or impulses."⁶

For this reason, although there are many intertwining facets of Eisenstein's interests, it is my contention that, to him, the visual arts constitute a topic important enough to be considered a field of investigation on its own.

This field of investigation is part of a broader literature in which work can be integrated. For example: Gérard

"not for the people". Under this category, Eisenstein's unrealized or unfinished films included "The Old and The New/The General Line" (1929, Soviet Union, project halted and then re-edited by archivists), "The Glass House" (1930, Paramount Productions, unrealized), "An American Tragedy" (1930, Paramount Productions, unrealized), "Que Viva Mexico" (1930-1932, funded by Upton Sinclair who never gave back to Eisenstein the footage he had shot and was subsequently edited by his assistant Grigori Alexandrov), "Bezhin Meadow" (1935, Soviet Union, shot during the Great Purges, accused of formalism and left unfinished), and lastly a film project about Pushkin which was also halted.

See: Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin*. London : I.B. Tauris, 2009. Taylor, Richard. *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*. London: Routledge, 2011. Groys, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*. London: Verso Books, 2011. Beumers, Birgit. *A History of Russian Cinema*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Bohn, Anna. *Film und Macht: zur Kunsttheorie Sergej M. Eisensteins 1930-1948*. Munchen: Diskurs film, 2003.

Conio's *Eisenstein. Le cinéma comme art total* (2007) focuses on his approach to film as a synthesis of all other art forms. Also, Francois Albera's *S.M Eisenstein: Cinématisme Peinture et Cinema*⁷ (2009) is a major work broadening Eisenstein's endeavors from cinema into art history. It presents not only a pertinent overview of his writings that do not deal with his filmic practice in the narrow sense of the word, but also coins the term "cinématisme" to describe Eisenstein's will to seek cinematic qualities in pre-filmic artworks, marking the use of cinema as a tool to interpret artworks preceding it. Furthermore, Ada Ackerman's *Eisenstein et Daumier: Des affinités électives* (2013) presents the influence that French caricaturist Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) has had on Eisenstein's theory, drawing, and film-making in the context of the "Passions slaves pour Daumier" and constructs a firm dialog between cinema and caricature.

In a more recent publication on Eisenstein, *Notes for a General History of Cinema* (2016), Antonio Somaini examines Eisenstein's 1946 fragmented and incomplete text titled "General History of Cinema" from a media archaeological perspective. He studies the genealogy of cinema's "expressive means", meaning past media and forms of representation that had employed the same aesthetic approaches that cinema would later explore, such as composition of several images in one frame, projection technique, and all forms of montage. These "expressive means" also respond to an "urge to record phenomena" and to halt the flow of time, essential to Eisenstein's theorization of art history since the 1920s.⁸

Somaini sees Eisenstein's approach to the visual arts as not teleological aiming at the affirmation of cinema as the

7 Sergei Eisenstein, "Ermolova", in *Cinematisme : peinture et cinema*, ed. Francois Albera, (Dijon: Les Presses du reel, 2009), 207-228.

8 Somaini, "Eisenstein's Media Archaeology," 20.

pinnacle of the development of form and whose history can be pinned down to a certain moment in time. He rather favors the placing of cinema in connection with other art forms as part of a network: "In fact, even though Eisenstein insists repeatedly on the idea that cinema is the "heir" and the "synthesis of the arts," he did not consider the cinema of his own times to be a final stage of development of the history of the arts."⁹ He thus considers cinema both as a "synthesis" of the visual arts and their history as well as their "heir" in the sense that all other art forms can be embedded and found in it¹⁰.

I locate my work in this strand of research dealing with the relation between Eisenstein and the visual arts, aligning myself to the ideas expressed in *Notes* as I adopt a non-teleological approach to Eisenstein. I also rely on *Notes* as a way to contextualize and to open up my examination to Eisenstein's previous texts about artists which are more robust articles, thus hoping to extract out of them more detailed knowledge, showing how his later approach to them is indebted and anchored in his earlier considerations, and also how this consideration can enter in dialog with an iconographic approach to art history, uncovering tensions between image and interpretation, re-affirming his use of the image of Janus as a dialog between cinema and the visual arts.

Case studies

In the first part of my dissertation, in order to examine Eisenstein on the visual arts, I focus on four specific articles which I treat as "case studies": "Yermolova" studying Valentin Serov's (1865-1911) portrait of theater actress Maria Yermolova, "El Greco" and "El Greco y el Cine" considering the Cretan painter Doménikos Theotokópoulos (1541-1614), and lastly

9 Ibid.,21.

10 Ibid.,26.

“Piranesi or the Fluidity of Form” analyzing Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s (1720-1778) etchings.

These case studies do not constitute the totality of Eisenstein's theory throughout his entire life. I contend however that they, by virtue of their robustness, completeness, and the fact that they deeply analyze one specific artist, are representative and even emblematic of Eisenstein's larger considerations on the history of the visual arts. I thereby exclude fragmentary and incomplete works.

Because of their methodological differences, in order to achieve a maximum level of thoroughness and clarity, I reshape their content either around key concepts, or around the paintings constitutive of Eisenstein’s arguments.

In order to understand Eisenstein, I go against him; against his chaos, his hyper-referentiality, and his repetitions.

The question the first part of my research engages with is: How does cinema operate in static visual artworks such as paintings and etchings? This question has preoccupied both visual culture and film theorists when translating and studying Eisenstein's article "Yermolova".

Lev Manovich and Alla Efimova’s anthology *Tekstura: Russian Essays on Visual Culture* (1993) features "Yermolova" translated into English. While introducing their book, Manovich and Efimova theorize that “ways of seeing are responsible for structuring an extremely wide range of cultural phenomena. To unpack what it means “to see” is to expose the relationship between the philosophical (in broad sense, including scientific and theological) ideas about vision and their embodiment in actual material forms-painting,

architecture, maps, illustrations, etc."¹¹ *Tekstura* specifically opens up the field of visual culture to Soviet specificity, but it remains more invested in Eisenstein's general theories about the arts and less inclined to dissect his ideas about the artworks he considered.

Also, in the 2010 translation of "Yermolova", edited by Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor for the second volume of Eisenstein's selected writings titled *Towards a Theory of Montage*, the introduction by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith is aligned to the thesis behind *Tekstura*, rightfully interpreting the portrait as a "two-dimensional static object which only yields up its secrets when reconceived as a series of views akin to the progression of shots in cinema."¹² It captures the essence of Eisenstein's art historical research, which is the novelty that cinema as a way of seeing and interpreting can bring to artworks preceding it, but without further elaboration.

Furthermore, Pietro Montani's essay *The Uncrossable Threshold: The Relation of Painting and Cinema in Eisenstein* in Angela Dalle Vacche's *The Visual Turn* (2003) provides a synthetic overview of several references made by Eisenstein to painters, including Serov, and of his general analytical method. It integrates Eisenstein's writings on artists within a "substantial continuity between painting and cinema: Both, for Eisenstein, belong within a problematic tradition of representation and have to do with a certain body of problems that have been handed down to the figurative arts over time. (...) For Eisenstein, a history of art can be formed as a description of paths of this kind of problematic tradition of representation whose course would therefore be marked by the more or less well-chosen inventions

11 Alla Efimova and Lev Manovich, introduction to *Tekstura: Russian Essays on Visual Culture*, by Alla Efimova and Lev Manovich, Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1993), xxi-xxii.

12 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, introduction to *Towards a Theory of Montage: Sergei Eisenstein Selected Works*, Volume 2, ed. Richard Taylor, (London: I.B Tauris, 2010), xv.

with which the different cultures have gradually articulated and exemplified “in-image” the questions of representation.¹³”

The art historical research around Serov became known to Western European art historians thanks to Dimitri Vladimirovich Sarabianov (1923-2013) and his work on the exhibition catalog of *Russian and Soviet Painting: An Exhibition from the Museums of the USSR Presented at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco* (1977) as well as on Serov’s monograph (reprinted in 2012)¹⁴. Sarabianov makes no mention of Eisenstein’s text while analyzing any of the Russian painter’s artworks, but is rather more invested in the study of the artist, his evolution, his art historical influences and less in posthumous interpretations of his paintings.

More recently, Serov emerged as more than a painter and considerations of his contributions to other art forms such as drawing and stage design are increasing in visibility, especially in Roger B. Anderson and Paul Debreczeny’s *Russian Narrative & Visual Art: Varieties of Seeing* (1994). The study sheds light on the intersection between literature and painting, but the writers only mention Yermolova's portrait in passing along with the changes in Serov’s artistic practice, without analyzing it further. The book also takes note of Eisenstein’s interest in Dostoevsky¹⁵, but draws no connection

13 Pietro Montani, “The Uncrossable Threshold: The Relation of Painting and Cinema in Eisenstein”, in: *The Visual Turn: classical film theory and art history*, ed. Angela Dalle Vacche, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 206-207.

14 Sarabianov, Dmitri V. Valentin Serov. (Confidential Concepts, 2012).

15 Roger B Anderson and Paul Debreczeny, *Russian Narrative & Visual Art: Varieties of Seeing*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 90.

between him and Serov via the cinematic interpretation.

Furthermore, Olga Haldy's *Mamonotov's Private Opera: The Search for Modernism in Russian Theater* (2010) presents the theater director Savva Mamonotov (1841-1918)'s importance in Russia and his collaboration with and his promotion of several artists, including Serov, but Eisenstein's interpretation of Yermolova is too far in time, having been written in 1937, and thus falls outside of the scope of the otherwise brilliant study.

Peter Leek's *Russian Painting* (2012) constitutes an important overview of the themes which have traversed painting in Russia. While the section dedicated to portraiture features several representations of Maria Yermolova, Eisenstein's interpretation is excluded from the discussion.

I find that film theorists question the relationship between Eisenstein and Serov, examining the intersections of cinema and painting, but without analyzing the "Yermolova" article in depth. Art historians researching Serov seem less inclined to weave a tighter bond between these two fields. The reason for this is possibly because Eisenstein's publications feature more in editions dealing with cinema than in those dedicated to art history, and because his reputation as a filmmaker still outshines all his other endeavors, leading art historians to either neglect his essays or to be unfamiliar with his work beyond film to begin with.

El Greco motivated some of the most fervent debates in the 20th century pertaining to his supposed astigmatism which presumably caused the deformation of his compositions, debates whose history Andrea Pinotti surveyed in his article *El Greco at the Ophthalmologist's* (2014)¹⁶.

16 Pinotti, Andrea, "El Greco at the Ophthalmologist's," *Predella*, no.35 (2014): 3-23.

El Greco's representation of city spaces in relation to cinema captured the interest of Giuliana Bruno in *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (2002). She places Eisenstein's work on El Greco in the section dealing with "City Views", explaining how his *View and Plan of Toledo* (c.1609) is at "the intersection of view painting and cartography"¹⁷ and how "here the painter, imaginatively inscribed in the picture, offers a map of the city as a geographic spectacle, opening it against a view of the urban panorama shown in the background and thus enabling the beholder to inhabit the multiplicity of spectatorial positions."¹⁸ Her comparison between view painting (itself a mixture of the codes of landscape painting and urban topography) and cinematic viewing space is nonetheless restricted to a fraction of El Greco's work that Eisenstein analyzed.

Also, Camille Pageard's article *Eisenstein et Malraux face au Greco: Le cinématisme des Voix du Silence ou la "construction déformée" de l'histoire de l'art* (2010)¹⁹ draws a parallel between the work of André Malraux on El Greco in his 1951 essay "Voix du Silence" and some excerpts from Eisenstein's "El Greco y el Cine" present in Francois Albera's *Cinématisme* anthology, but without delving into its intricacies, construing methodological similarities between Eisenstein and Malraux, and quite broadly, to art history.

In the art historical scholarship, Jonathan Brown and Richard G. Mann study El Greco's role and importance in the

17 Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, (New York: Verso, 2011), 61.

18 Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 61.

19 Camille Pageard, « Eisenstein et Malraux face au Greco. Le cinématisme des Voix du silence ou la "construction déformée" de l'histoire de l'art », *André Malraux Review* 37, (February 2010): 39-49.

context of *Spanish Paintings of the Fifteenth Through Nineteenth Centuries* (1990) as part of a large exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, stressing his time in Italy, while Andrew R. Caspers' *Art and the Religious Image in El Greco's Italy* (2014) focuses on his innovations in religious iconography, dealing with themes such as repetition and authenticity.

But the most recent publication on El Greco, relevant for my research, is titled *El Greco en el Cine* (2013), written in Spanish by Adolfo de Mingo Lorente and Palma Martinez-Burgos. It is the only study by art historians which analyzes Eisenstein's writings about El Greco and confronts them to an iconographic discourse, centered briefly around attraction montage in *Storm over Toledo* and around the composition of figures in several of his paintings. Their text is rich in observations and insight into the specificities of the painter, although it excludes the original text on El Greco published in *Nonindifferent Nature*, focusing only on the later article "El Greco y el Cine". Notably absent from the otherwise rich study is an analysis of the more challenging areas of Eisenstein's writings; such as El Greco's painting through a 28 mm lens.

Consequently, although El Greco preoccupies both film theorists and to some extent art historians, no study of him surveys *both* of Eisenstein's articles about his paintings from a cinematic and an iconographic perspective, so the knowledge about the connection between the two artists remains fragmented and incomplete. Out of the three case studies which I am considering in this dissertation, Piranesi is by far the artist that the scholarship around Eisenstein has studied the deepest.

The recent state of the art on Piranesi focuses on his literary contributions and his numerous publications in *Piranesi's Lost Words* (2015) by Heather Hyde Minor. *The Piranesi Effect* (2015) edited by Kerrianne Stone and Gerard Vaughan deals with the reception of his work worldwide and the influence it

carried across centuries and disciplines, but does not travel to the Soviet Union. Two studies however emerge as most relevant for my consideration of the cinematic nature of the Italian etcher's work: Manfredo Tafuri's *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Garde and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (1987), and Steven Jacobs's *Eisenstein's Piranesi and Cinematic Space* (2016).

Tafuri focuses on the link between architecture and formalism in Eisenstein's analysis of the *Carceri* etchings relying on the explosion of their elements. Tafuri sees this approach as representative of the montage process traversing the director's theories. According to him, Eisenstein forces the artworks "to lose their natural autonomy, to come out of their isolation, in order to become part of an ideal series: to become, in other words, simple frames in a *cinematic phrase*²⁰." He retraces Eisenstein's thought process in order to present the text but does not comment on the results of Eisenstein's research and what they mean for his take on the visual arts.

Jacobs sets himself apart from previous scholarship and examines Piranesi's role in Eisenstein's overall cinema, in his "proto-cinema" theories (as in the presence of montage in pre-filmic media), in his writings on architecture, as well as in his realized and unrealized films.

And while his approach constitutes a great preamble to the Piranesi article, it remains general and too invested in Eisenstein's side projects to provide a concrete and detailed interpretation of the etchings, and I find it somewhat swayed by the consideration of architecture as the locus of Eisenstein's thought.

20 Manfredo Tafuri, "The Historicity of the Avant-Garde: Piranesi and Eisenstein", *The Sphere and the Labyrinth, Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987), 56.

Beyond intertextuality

"I am convinced in more ways than one his [Eisenstein's] erudition is killing him."²¹

This is what Soviet film director Alexander Dozhenko (1894-1956) sarcastically said about his peer, and this is what the researcher examining Eisenstein's biography, film theories, and texts about the visual arts is confronted with: Erudition, chaos, montage.

In the second part of my dissertation, I re-examine the texts I chose in order to find the sources Eisenstein used, focusing specifically on the names of researchers and books he cited. These articles mostly feature European art historians. The question I seek to answer for this section of my work is: In what way did the ideas which Eisenstein extracted from art historians feed into his approach to the cinematic visual arts and into his research methodology?

Mikhail Iampolsky's description of Eisenstein's work method in his article *Theory as Quotation* (1999) expresses the challenges I strove to overcome in having to choose which sources to analyze:

"All those familiar with Eisenstein's theoretical writings know how difficult these texts are to read. It is not that they are very complicated. Rather, they resist reading due to a very particular use of references and sources, and an extremely bizarre and eclectic combination of material."²²

21 Ronald Bergan, *Eisenstein: A Life in Conflict*, (New York: The Overlook Press, 1999), 270.

22 Mikhail Iampolsky, "Theory as Quotation", *October*, Vol. 88 (Spring, 1999): 52.

Indeed, for Eisenstein, the citation occasionally substitutes the theory instead of synthesizing it, and he has the habit of using the exact same quotation over and over again without always extensively relying on the ideas which lead to the sentence to begin with²³. Moreover, his texts are, in their manner of writing, at times a montage of several quotes:

“First of all, theory for him (Eisenstein) is a kind of intertextual source, a source of quotations. He works with theories as if were sources. Usually, he extracts one moment, one statement, from the whole theoretical construction of a predecessor, decontextualizes it, and then looks at this statement exactly as he would a fragmented quotation.”²⁴

His writings on Serov, El Greco, and Piranesi do not break with this chaotic style of expression which characterizes his texts on the cinema, and while reading them, I realize that not everyone mentioned in them was instrumental to Eisenstein's ideas. Nevertheless, while fully aware of the intertextuality that traverses them, I introduce the idea that Eisenstein's knowledge is not only hyper-referential, and that he is at times invested in deeper connections with specific writers who have helped shape his ideas about the visual arts, ideas which my research brings out.

When facing Eisenstein's writings, with their zest, digressions, and disorder, I decide on a strategy to help me with the choice of art historians that I engage with. I choose to investigate only those whose names recur more than once in different contexts or in relation to different ideas throughout the four texts. I thereby exclude “casual” hints neither explained nor justified, which are the digressions out of his active intellect.

23 Ibid.,55.

24 Ibid., 54.

As I demonstrate, theory for Eisenstein is not *only* a source of quotation in respect to Hugo Kehrer, Albert Giesecke, and Jean-Martin Charcot.

The secondary literature on these writers is quite uneven. In the case of Kehrer, I located some information about his life in the biographical reference work *Neue deutsche Biografie* (1977)²⁵, in the *Internationales biographisches Archiv*²⁶, and in Christian Fuchmeister's *Kontinuität und Blockade* (2006). I found no study of his book on El Greco which Eisenstein relied on, let alone his reception in the Soviet Union.

As for Giesecke, accounts of his life and work were entirely absent. A single and unique mention on the *Zentrale Datenbank Nachlässe*²⁷ lead me to conduct the very first archival research about him in order to uncover his identity and contextualize his work on Piranesi, which was central to Eisenstein's article.

Nevertheless, Charcot is by far the most examined of all three writers. Julien Bogousslavsky (2004) studies the changing function of art in Charcot's life which traverses his scientific theories as well as his hobbies²⁸. Alla Vein focuses on his contribution to Russian neurology (2011) but her study is more quantitative than qualitative²⁹. Georges Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the*

25 Friedrich Piel, „Kehrer, Hugo“, in: Neue Deutsche Biographie 11 (1977), last modified November 11, 2016, last accessed March 13, 2017, <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116093498.html>

26 Hugo Kehrer, Internationales biographisches Archiv, 30/06, (Signature: Zsn 22543 / Lesesaal HB 2 Ga 2050).

27 [Zentrale Datenbank Nachlässe, Nachlässe G, Giesecke, Albert \(1881-1966\), http://www.nachlassdatenbank.de/viewsingle.php?category=G&person_id=53268&asset_id=58785&sid=7720caa85888dcbc983e](http://www.nachlassdatenbank.de/viewsingle.php?category=G&person_id=53268&asset_id=58785&sid=7720caa85888dcbc983e)

28 Bogousslavsky, Julien. 2004. "Charcot and Art: From a Hobby to Science". *European Neurology*. 51, no. 2: 78-83.

29 Vein, Alla A. 2011. "Jean-Martin Charcot at the Birth of Russian Neurology". *European Neurology*. 65, no. 2: 75-81.

Salpetriere surveys the doctor's use of photography in his scientific practice, excluding Charcot's own treaties on the arts which interested Eisenstein, mainly *Etudes cliniques sur la grande hysterie ou hystero-epilepsie* (1885) and *Les demoniaques dans l'art* (1887). Charcot's impact on Eisenstein's formulation of ecstasy remains unexplored by the current scholarship.

In order to determine what kind of use Eisenstein made of these art historians, I unearth his citations of them, and return to the original books which he consulted and compare his writings to theirs, to highlight the circulation of ideas between them.

My aim is to highlight the extent of Eisenstein's reliance on his sources and how he positions himself in relation to their works, by delimiting which ideas about art history were his and which were theirs so as to eventually outline his originality, and most importantly to inscribe him in the historiography of the visual arts.

Contribution

My contribution to art history is to add to the reception of these three painters, Serov, El Greco, and Piranesi in the Soviet Union, a reception that constitutes a blind spot in most studies around them. I also make Eisenstein's own writings on the visual arts less isolated and more in contact with European writers, especially since they deal with the analysis of the "expressive means" of media, as in with reflections on processes of creations central to all artistic forms.

My contribution to film theory is to initiate a transition from a broad understanding of Eisenstein's art theories to the more specific unpacking of the notions he formulated about certain works of art. I sets out to prove, the research methods of one field, in this case cinema, are not only useful but also

necessary to fathom and expand another field, painting, etching etc. when considering the arts as part of a network and not as isolated cells, in a manner that is useful to both film theorists and art historians.

My objective is to open up the first dialog between Eisenstein and the sources he used for his research on the visual arts and to broaden art history to encompass discourses by writers who were not traditional art historians. I do not intend for the art historical gaze to "correct" Eisenstein's "cinematic" one, or for the writings of historians to undermine his texts nor the other way round, but rather to highlight that precisely the duality of Eisenstein's approach; his cinematic understanding of painting as well as his cinematic re-interpretation of art historians, is the core of his theory.

Ausblick: Cinematic Paintings

I- VALENTIN SEROV

In his 1947 text *Notes for a General History of Cinema*, Sergei Eisenstein briefly mentions Valentin Serov's 1905 portrait of theater actress Maria Yermolova in "the history of the problem of space and time in painting", writing that: "Time which grows out into into a montage succession! On the problem of multipointness, not only in space but also in time. Do not forget Van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Couple* with its multi-point perspective. [Y]ermolova is "more realistic": the mirror in it give the possibility not to break up the surroundings."³⁰ Eisenstein

30 Sergei Eisenstein, *Notes for a General History of Cinema*, ed.N. I. Kleiman, and Antonio Somaini.)Amsterdam: Amsterdam university press, 2016), 138-139.

questions the possibility of multipointness³¹; as in the coexistence of several points of views "shot" in different moments in time within the same image.

In 1937, he had written a 20-page article about Yermolova which he saw at the Tretyakov Gallery in 1935³². He intercepted his text with decoupage and sketches of the artwork which he used to illustrate his ideas. While the writing mainly focuses on a cinematic quality in Serov's portrait without any sub-divisions and with some digressions, the postscriptum deals with the works of other Russian painters some of whom were cinematic and others less.

Eisenstein's starting point is the feeling which *Yermolova* evokes in those who behold her portrait, and especially in him, even though, by his own account, he has never seen her on stage. She is only known to him thanks to Konstantin Stanislavsky's description of her powerful talent, writing that "many were those who experienced the quite special feeling of *exaltation* and *inspiration* that gripped the spectator when watching the original of this portrait"³³

The article centers around the reason behind these emotions which Eisenstein locates in the compositional factors traversing the artwork making it overtake its medium and thus imposing a cinematic quality in how it articulates the relationship to time and space: "To my mind, every truly great

31 On the role of multipointness in Russian thought and according to Pavel Florensky, see: Mikhail Iampolsky, "Point-Pathos-Totality," in *Notes for a General History of Cinema*, ed. N. I. Kleiman, and Antonio Somaini. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam university press, 2016), 357-371.

32 Sergei Eisenstein, "Yermolova", in: *Towards a Theory of Montage: Sergei Eisenstein Selected Works, Volume 2*, ed. Richard Taylor, (London: I.B Tauris, 2010), 83.

33 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 82. (my emphasis)

work of art is *always* distinguished by this characteristic: it contains, as part and parcel of the artist's *method*, elements of what in the next phase of development of that particular art form will become the *principles* and *methods* of a new stage in the forward progress of that art. In the given instance this is especially interesting, because these *unusual* compositional factors not only lie beyond the limits of the methods of painting used in Serov's era, but *altogether beyond the limits of painting as it is narrowly understood*, at least from the viewpoint of those who do not regard the pictorial medium of cinema – its dynamic use of light and montage to make pictures – as a contemporary form of painting."³⁴

Historically, around the time Serov finished Yermolova, early Russian films explored the idea that some images are endowed with a mysterious power similar to the one Eisenstein sees in the portrait. For example: Yakov Protazanov's film *Satan Triumphant* (1917) uses living portraits in line with occult theories, to claim that certain pictures possess the power to retain "the animal magnetism of the model which would then influence whomever looked at them. (...) Films also seized upon this theory."³⁵ Similarly, Eisenstein sees a mysterious power in the portrait but he circumvents supernatural considerations of *Yermolova*, favoring a cinematic interpretation of her power to bring exaltation and inspiration to her audience. This power started being at the center of his texts on the montage of attractions in theater and in cinema, in 1922 and 1924 respectively. In them, he examines possible methods to impact the audience and strategies to use moving images in order to move the beholder not only to provide an opportunity for ideological enlightenment but also to include the audience in the creation of the artwork which without the active human eye and

34 Ibid., 83.

35 Yuri Tsivian, "Portraits, Mirrors, Death: On Some Decadent Clichés in Early Russian Film," *Iris*, no. 14-15 (Autumn, 1992): 79.

the interpretative capability of the brain can never reaches its full meaning³⁶. When examining paintings, Eisenstein extends his theory to static images, positing that they can likewise move their audience if they contain cinematic factors. Nevertheless, in order to reach these factors, a tactic is needed to open up the image; to dissect it. Eisenstein's blade is montage.

1. *Yermolova*

With my Janus model in mind, I firstly rely on cinema's forward-looking gaze, extracting out of the text the compositional factors which Eisenstein deems as necessary for the consideration of *Yermolova* as cinematic, and exploring the characteristics of the cinematic movement animating her. I secondly turn to art history's backward-looking gaze, confronting Eisenstein's cinematic reading of the portrait's composition with my own iconographic examination of its independently of his views, and then commenting on his conclusions. The question which both of my approaches answer is: "What are the compositional factors in *Yermolova* that incurred, facilitated or even contradicted the cinematic reading present in the article?" and in regards to the later mention of *Yermolova* in *Notes for a General History of Cinema*, "

36 Sergei Eisenstein, "The Montage of Attractions", in: *Sergei Eisenstein selected works. Volume I, Writings, 1922-1934*, ed. Richard Taylor, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 34.

how did the problem of space and time articulate itself in the portrait?".

1.1. Mirror in the set-up

When scanning Yermolova's composition in 1937, Eisenstein focuses on the role that the mirror plays in gently breaking the arrangement of visual elements, a role that would prove to be cinematic. He finds that the frame of the mirror resting behind Yermolova cuts her from the waist up, the frame constituted by the upper part of the same mirror and the reflection of the cornices emphasize her head, the line where the ground meets the wall cuts her from the knee up, and lastly, the edges of the painting present her from top to bottom. According to him, this disposition is cinematic because the mirror and its contours operate like "edges of individual film shots. Admittedly unlike the standard edges of film frames, they have irregular outlines but they nevertheless fulfill to perfection the basic functions of film shots"³⁷. But not all these differently-framed shots within Yermolova are of the same nature, and Eisenstein inquires as to "what, in general, distinguishes one shot from another, apart from the scale and the edges of the frame? Above all, of course, the placing of the set-up."³⁸ He cuts up a reproduction of Yermolova according to the shots he sees and attaches the isolated pictures to his article. He wants to prove that the mechanism enabling the expression of the portrait's inner power is the montage of several pictures with varying set-us, which repeat the functioning of the mirror in the composition, as such: The full-framed figure is shot from above because we can see the floor, the figure from the knees upward is shot head-one because it is placed parallel to the wall, Yermolova from the

37 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 86.

38 Ibid., 87.

waist-up is shot slightly from below as the ceiling can be seen above it, and lastly Yermolova's face is shot from below³⁹. Eisenstein further highlights the existence of several images of and within the actress by repeating Stanislavsky's quote stating that: "To every part that she played, Yermolova always gave a particular image that was unlike the preceding one and unlike that of any other actor."⁴⁰

Historically, mirrors were also part of Russian early cinema which stressed the importance of power-exerting mirrors and portraits⁴¹: "From 1899 to 1908, at least eight films by Melies alone were variations of the "living portrait" plot. (...) Russian films of the teens privileged mirrors, shadows, and to a lesser degree, portraits and windows. Between 1909 and 1911 these still figured among neutral articles of the diegesis. By 1912-1913, mirrors, shadows and portraits started to accumulate symbolic potential, and by the mid-teens they were often employed in the role of cinematic motifs similar to the ones found in romantic and decadent literature."⁴² Furthermore, film set designers re-conceived of the "backspace" (as in the space behind the camera) and began to highlight its importance using mirrors on canvas with a painted reflection in them. These reflections were "recognized as the unique property of the film medium (...) suggesting lateral off-screen space and "the space behind me."⁴³

Consequently, I find that within this filmic practice, the mirror as the locus of symbolic power refers specifically to a cinematic space within the portrait and to another space

39 Ibid.

40 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 82.

41 Yuri Tsivian, "Portraits, Mirrors, Death: On Some Decadent Clichés in Early Russian Film," *Iris*, no. 14-15 (Autumn, 1992): 68.

42 Tsivian, "Portraits, Mirrors, Death", 69.

43 Tsivian, "Portraits, Mirrors, Death", 71.

beyond it, which Eisenstein explores when asserting that the mirror functions like a film frame. This predication implies Serov's pre-selection of visual elements to be included in the portrait, and thus his willingness to use a specific disposition of *Yermolova's* shots and not another. In fact, *Yermolova*, by the very nature of her craft, was already herself constituted of her myriad representations on stage, which Serov selected transposed unto the canvas.

Eisenstein uses montage as a surgeon's blade and as an analytical tool cutting through the picture and disassembling what the mirror, also through its montage, compositionally assembles and the opposing representations that it integrates in a global image that is *Yermolova*. The mirror binds *Yermolova* seen from above *and* one from below, a close-up *and* a waist-up at the same time into the *Yermolova* we see in front of us. By breaking down the pieces buried within *Yermolova* and allowing us to see them as separate in time and distinct, Eisenstein compromises the organic unity which *Yermolova* otherwise retains.

Serov's use of light further emphasizes this wholeness and constitutes the second compositional factor making *Yermolova* cinematic.

1.2. *Dynamic light*

Eisenstein writes that the treatment of light constitutes "powerful means of influencing the spectator"⁴⁴ and when beholding *Yermolova*, he describes it as such: "This increase in the intensity of lighting from shot to shot, merging into a single uninterrupted process, is perceived as a *gradual brightening*, an *increasing illumination* and *animation* of the actress's face, which

44 Eisenstein, "*Yermolova*", 89.

gradually advances out of the dim background of the picture. (...) Thus a reciprocal interplay is set up between the admiration of the enthusiastic spectator in front of the picture and the inspired actress on the canvas – in exactly the same way that the auditorium and the stage once merged as both were captivated by the magic of her acting. (...) The montage principle of composition used here is profoundly original and individual.”⁴⁵

As a counter-example to Serov’s achievement of conveying a sensation of inner illumination, Eisenstein does not mince his words in the article’s post-scriptum when using the failure of Serov’s teacher who trained him at the St-Petersburg Academy of the Arts⁴⁶, Ilya Repin, to articulate the same quality in a portrait of Lev Tolstoy, writing that: “Even worse, however, is the fact that Repin tries to convey the idea of ‘inward illumination’ equally simplistically, with head-on literalism. As a result, instead of a great sage we have something like a Chinese lantern, with the simulacrum of a literal, physical source of light inside it, a source of light whose pink glow shines through a pink-tinted face. (...) The error of Repin’s method lies in his wanting to convey the *generalized* theme, i.e a theme extending beyond the limits of simple depiction, by purely *depictive* means. The result is a work of appalling falsity.”⁴⁷

I analyze the use of light by both Serov and Eisenstein since it was central to both their practices:

Art historically, Serov’s earlier works were influenced by French impressionism and its approach to light, color, and

45 Eisenstein, “Yermolova”, 89-90.

46 Sarabianov, *Serov*, 19.

47 Eisenstein, “Yermolova”, 95.

atmosphere: “The application of Impressionist painting techniques was an attempt not only to express personal feelings, but also to reveal spiritual truths and achieve a balance between pictorial subject and artistic style.”⁴⁸ But Yermolova is more controlled in chromatic palette and far more austere in terms of composition, circumventing the depiction of elements typically associated with the theater such as curtains⁴⁹ and “favoring a linear silhouette, an all-encompassing rhythm, and well-defined strokes of color.”⁵⁰ Serov uses large areas of pure color in the portrait, particularly black and gray, which he softens with hues of violet in different intensities, that gently reveal themselves to our eyes, in the background and on the reflection of the mirror.

Cinematically, luminosity is part of the expressive traits of the cinema which guarantee its capability to transform reality into a kind of wonder, as Dudley Andrew points out: “The luminosity of the motion-picture image also results in a considerable range of tone, between the brightest highlight and the deepest black. Both in black-and-white and in color films, the most delicate gradations in the image are therefore possible⁵¹”. Consequently, when cinematically used, light can endow a static portrait with the wonder of a film.

I find that *Yermolova*’s luminosity has two functions:

Firstly, the light guarantees her bodily unity. In early Russian cinema, films such as Aleksandr Volkov’s *Behind the*

48 Isabel Wünsche, *The Organic School of the Russian Avant-Garde: Nature’s Creative Principles* (Farnham : Ashgate, 2015), 34.

49 Ibid., 52.

50 Dimitri Sarabianov, introduction to *Russian and Soviet Painting, an exhibition from the museums of the USSR presented at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco*, (New York : The Museum, 1977), 21.

51 Dudley Andrew, “Motion Picture”. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (2007), accessed December 27 2016, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9110698>.

Screen (1917) depict the tenuous relationship between portraits and mirrors in cinema and their ability to compromise the protagonist's sense of identity, referring to the "apprehension that cinema might be able to split our organic self-image into a series of snapshots"⁵².

While this fragmenting ability of cinema was previously met with fear, Eisenstein uses its creative potential to underscore *Yermolova's* body which retains its wholeness although it can be fragmented through montage. Its unity is guaranteed thanks to Serov's use of the mirror and of the light as overarching principle merging all of her representations into a single global image.

Secondly, the light reflects *Yermolova's* inner spirituality. Serov brings her spirituality to our attention 'dynamically' by letting it stem *from inside* the picture, while Repin spreads light illustratively in his *Tolstoy*. *Yermolova's* luminosity is cinematic because it combines her different representations, each with its own set-up and thus its own light and emerges as a meta-effect.

Both the mirror and the light combine *Yermolova's* representations into a single and whole image, and what rises out of this juxtaposition is of utmost importance for Eisenstein: It constitutes the type of resulting movement animating the portrait which is perceived cinematically.

2. Seeing intraconceptual movement

52 Tsivian, "Portraits, Mirrors, Death", 78.

While examining the various set-ups constituting Yermolova, Eisenstein points out that: "what has been fixed on canvas is not a series of four successive positions of an object but four successive positions of *the eye of the observer*. Therefore these four points are not a function of the *behaviour of the object* (...) but are a characteristic of the *behavior of the spectator*."⁵³ The behavior of the spectator guided by these set-ups follows a cinematic path which he also describes: "then it transpires that the eye has described a complete arc of 180 degrees. The figure has been shot in sequence from four different viewpoints and the combination of these four points gives a sense of movement."⁵⁴ He also sketches the perception of the portrait through a semi-circle around it. He continues by highlighting a strong parallel between the perception of the painting and the perception of a film, writing about Yermolova that: "Exactly the same means are employed to create the basic effect of dynamism in cinematography, where the only difference is that the projector shows to the spectator, in sequence and in the successive phases, not just separate parts of the figure but the figure as a whole."⁵⁵ When examining the type of movement that these set-ups incurs in the mind of Yermolova's viewer, Eisenstein writes that: "In the consciousness of the perceiver, segment is piled on segment, and their incongruence of color, lighting, outline, scale, movement etc. are what gives a sense of dynamic thrust and impulse which generates a sense of movement, ranging from the perception of purely physical movement to the most complex form of intraconceptual movement when we are dealing with montage that juxtaposes metaphors, images or concepts."⁵⁶

Nevertheless, this intraconceptual movement only reaches its full meaning when it stands in yet another conflict, this time with the static medium of painting, as Eisenstein writes:

53 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 89.

54 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 87.

55 Ibid., 88.

56 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 86.

“What makes her portrait so expressive is the fact that we have before us in this picture the *simultaneous unity of monumental immobility* and a whole gamut of *dynamic movement* (...) It is also interesting to observe that the effect has been achieved without a departure from realistic depiction, which, despite everything, retains its representational integrity.”⁵⁷

Briefly put, *Yermolova* contains several incongruous set-ups which the viewer sees as one image thanks to persistence of vision and out of which arises an intraconceptual movement. I unpack and explain this statement.

I find that *Yermolova*’s viewer mentally piles up two properties in the portrait; physical and conceptual:

The gaze juxtaposes physical attributes such as color, lighting etc. which constitute her cinematic compositional factors that I examined, as well as all the movements in *Yermolova*’s different set-ups tied together by the mirror; thus reaching a higher conceptual level.

These set-ups are aligned to the gaze of the spectator and out of them emerges an intraconceptual movement which is the product of two conflicts: Firstly, the conflict between all the representations within *Yermolova* and their respective dynamism; from above, from below, etc. Secondly, the conflict between this very dynamism emerging out of the image and the static nature of the huge canvas, as in between cinematic movement and the medium of painting.

57 Ibid., 96.

In fact, Serov began painting portraits of artists who are accustomed to being gazed at⁵⁸ in 1890 and *Yermolova* with her face, turn of the body, the pose and gesture, offers herself for our gaze as if we were part of the audience. She also stands out from his previous impressionist work thanks to her size, marking the start of the period when the painter began to monumentalize his human subjects during political disruptions which attempted to assert man's dignity (between 1905-1910), with a canvas size of 224 x 120 cm⁵⁹.

I predicate that this gives the image an 'intermedial' quality, essential for cinematic artworks, and for a stronger impact on the audience: The inner power *Yermolova* exudes on stage, she likewise exudes on canvas. The movement which animates her on canvas likewise animates films. Eisenstein harnesses this energy to understand why he saw her as attractive in keeping up with his early approach to theater when he combined "different media and modes of presentation such as live acting, posters, and sequences of projected film on the theater stage (which) constituted elements of this early montage of attractions. For the theater production of *The Mexican* in Moscow in , he even converted the theater space into a boxing ring."⁶⁰ Similarly, *Yermolova* is thus at the creative juncture between theater, painting and cinema, containing the energy of all of these media, but it is the presence of cinematic movement within it which allows it to overtake the limitations of the immobility of painting, and thereby impact its viewer.

How can a viewer behold such a complex image merging so many media?

58 Dimitri Sarabianov, *Valentin Serov*, (New York: Parkstone International, 2012), 94.

59 Sarabianov, *Serov*, 57.

60 Eivind Røssaak, "Figures of Sensation: Between Still and Moving Images", in: *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Strauven Wanda (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 330.

I posit that Eisenstein's answer to this question is the placing of the portrait clearly on the side of the spectator: Since *Yermolova's* representations were chosen to mark four successive positions of the eye of the observer, the viewer only manages to see it as a single image thanks to persistence of vision guiding the eye into a specific path. Persistence of vision⁶¹ entails the possibility of the audience's mind to juxtapose different images one on top of the other and to see them as one and see them as moving, answering to and bridging a gap between on one hand "how it was possible for a viewer to perceive a motion picture at all, and on the other hand it prescribed the inherent nature of cinema itself⁶². This illusion of movement specific to the film image⁶³ is well-realized in Serov's work because the depicted body of

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- 61 Persistence of vision is also part of Eisenstein's film practice in the form of a double exposure and a reflexive gesture. For example, in *Strike* (1924) Eisenstein superimposed the images of workers with those of an accordion to stimulate the audience to imagine music back at a time when only sound film was available. This superimposition of the images acts as "a continuation of the effect of persistence of vision, the phenomenon which at the time was thought by many to make film possible." See: Robert Robertson, *Eisenstein on the Audiovisual: The Montage of Music, Image and Sound in Cinema*, (New York : Tauris Academic Studies, 2009), 141.
- 62 Anderson, Joseph and Barbara Fisher. "The Myth of Persistence of Vision." *Journal of the University Film Association*, XXX:4, (Fall 1978): 3-8. accessed December 27 2016: <http://faculty.uca.edu/wsmeador/ccsmi/ccsmi/classicwork/Myth1.htm>
- 63 Oksana Bulgakova, "The Evolving Eisenstein: Three Theoretical Constructs of Sergei Eisenstein", in: *Eisenstein at 100. A Reconsideration*, ed. Albert LaValley and Barry P. Scherr (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 39.

Yermolova is capable of conveying movement while retaining its figurativeness and is thus not fragmented.

Consequently, the one frame that we see in *Yermolova*, secretly contains several mobile ones, is similar to a film sequence constituted of several frames per second and which, once projected, merge into one image. The difference is that, due to the absence of a projector projecting the portrait as a sequence in time, the canvas itself, flattens the image and presents it as one. It stands still, but behind it lay several pictures.

I conclude that *Yermolova*, like Eisenstein's future cinematic paintings, with its cinematic compositional factors such as the mirror and the light, its intraconceptual movement and its resulting intermedial status, is visible thanks to persistence of vision. The artwork not only aims at the organization of visual elements but also and most importantly at the organization of the gaze of the spectator.

3. Art history answers back

After having relied on Janus's forward-looking face and cinematically answered my initial question concerning *Yermolova* "What are the compositional factors in *Yermolova* that incurred, facilitated or even contradicted the cinematic reading present in the article?", this section of my analysis deals with the art historical approach to the organization of the gaze of the spectators that drove Eisenstein to his choice of painting and to his analysis.

When looking at the painting, I see how the mirror which Eisenstein cited constitutes a "rhythmic leitmotif"⁶⁴ echoed by the lines of its frame, the lines of the cornices within the mirror itself, the line on the wall, and the line separating the

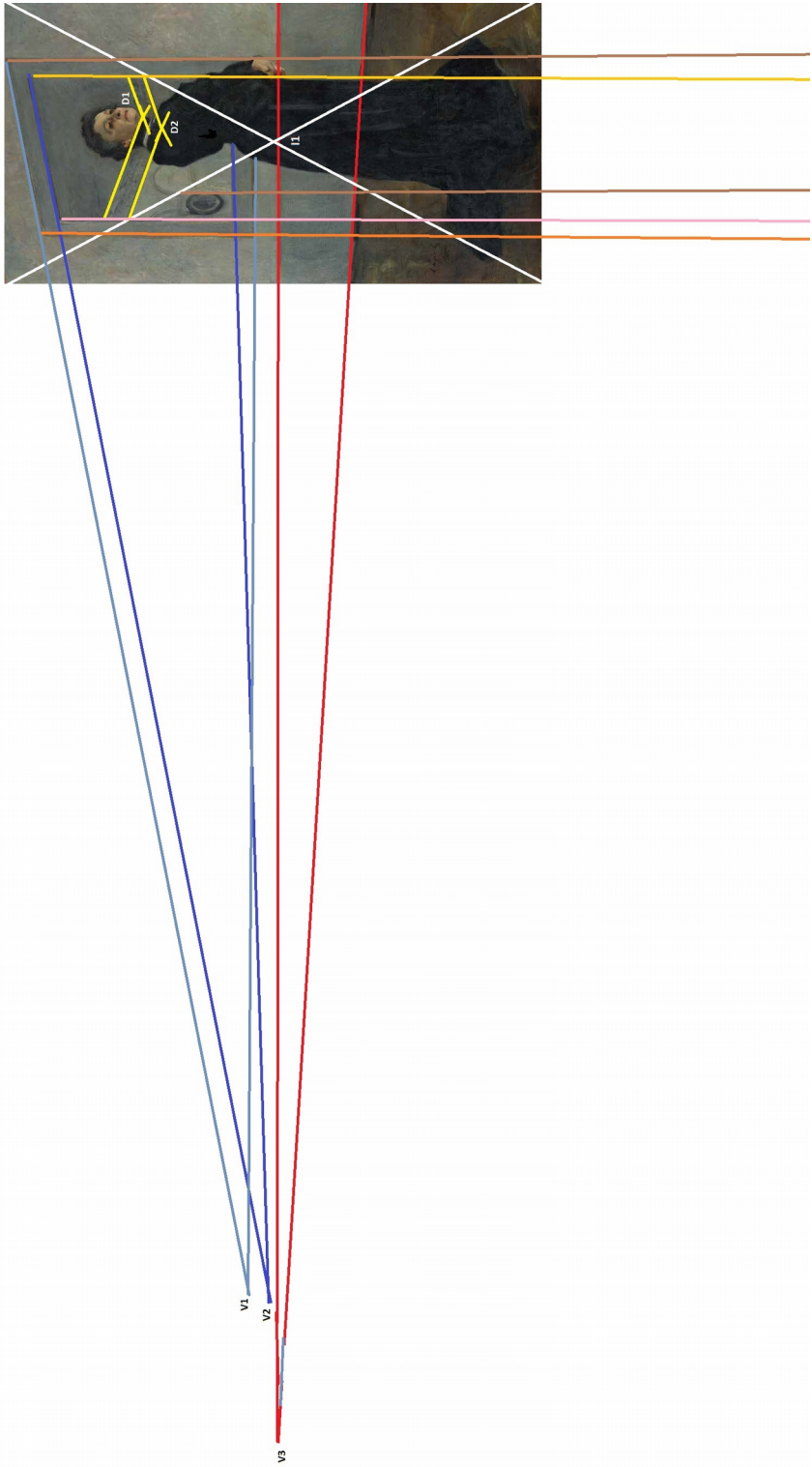
64 Sarabianov, *Serov*, 102.

ground from the wall. The sharply outlined figure of Yermolova stands proudly in the foreground and is in the center of all these lines' intersections. I therefore agree with Eisenstein as to the importance of the mirror in the composition, but I am curious as to the origins of the cinematic interpretation and wonder if his reliance on the fragmentation of the image based on the edges of the mirror suffices.

In fact, cutting up Yermolova's portrait myself has not given me conclusive evidence as to from where was the portrait, or the images within it, actually shot and I remain unable to see what Eisenstein saw in this portrait by using his method.

When attempting to locate the point to which the viewer's eye must be drawn and how the illusion of depth on a flat surface is created, determining the vanishing points of an artwork is essential. Also, the disposition of diagonals in painting either highlights certain aspects or objects or downplays them.

I seek the vanishing points of the artwork although Eisenstein does not mention them as such, positing that they may be the reason behind Eisenstein's association of each image to a particular set-up. Upon first glance, Yermolova's portrait presents no vanishing points *within* it, but it may as well feature vanishing points *outside of it*. In terms of method, by using a basic software, I was capable of prolonging all the lines in the painting, both horizontal and vertical to determine where their vanishing points lie, as in where they intersect, in the hopes of elucidating Eisenstein's ideas (ill.2).



III.1: My drawing of vanishing points and diagonals in Valentin Serov's Portrait of Maria Yermolova (1905).

- The upper line of the top part of the mirror's frame and the lower line of the bottom part of the mirror's frame, when prolonged, find their vanishing point (V1) outside of the picture, stooping downwards.
- The lower line of the top part of the mirror's frame and the upper line of the bottom part of the mirror's frame, when prolonged, find their vanishing point (V2) outside of the picture, stopping downwards, below (V1).
- The vertical edges of the mirror's frame, on the viewer's left-hand side and on the viewer's right-hand side are parallel to each other. They have no vanishing point.
- The line separating the ground from the wall and the line on the wall below the mirror, when prolonged, find their vanishing point (V3) outside of the picture, further than both (V1) and (V2).
- Within the mirror: The upper line constituting the cornice on the viewer's left-hand side delicately crosses under Yermolova's ear and under her fine pearl (?) earring. Along with the upper line constituting the cornice on the viewer's right-hand side, when prolonged, intersect in the picture, right under Yermolova's chin (D1).
- The lower line constituting the cornice on the viewer's left-hand side and the lower line constituting the cornice on the viewer's right-hand side, when

prolonged, intersect in the picture, at Yermolova's collarbone (D2).

- The area between D1 and D2 is completely black as Yermolova is wearing a high-collared evening gown. This same area is nonetheless cut in the middle by the white of the actress's pearl (?) necklace. The necklace and the earring are the only two pieces of jewelry in the austere painting.
- The diagonals of the painting intersect in the space (I1) below the mirror and above the line on the wall, right on Yermolova's hip. The surface is all colored black.

3.1. Vanishing Points and Diagonals

When confronting Eisenstein's interpretation with my take on the artwork, and thus the two faces of Janus with each other, I do not contest that the full-view of Yermolova is "shot" from above because we can see the floor.

Nonetheless, her image from the knees-up is "shot" head-on not because it is parallel to the wall as Eisenstein previously claimed, but rather because the vanishing point (V3) is situated in the middle of the composition although outside of the painting. (V3) is on the same line as the intersection of the painting's diagonals (I1). For this reason, I contend that this part of Yermolova is seen head-on, mainly because it confronts the viewer at eye level. Also, Eisenstein interprets Yermolova from the waist-up as having been shot slightly from below because the space around this particular frame is "no longer perceptible as being a reflection in the mirror. The depth provided by the mirror functions as the depth of an actual spatial background. This is a typical and well-known case in film-making practice,

when a relative impression of space is produced by means of simply altering the frame⁶⁵."

I argue that this Yermolova is indeed shot somewhat from below but not owing to the space around it, but rather because the horizontal edges of the mirror's frames find their vanishing points outside of the picture; leading slightly downwards. Indeed, when one looks at the lines I drew in order to determine both (V1) and (V2), one sees the sharp descent of the prolonged lines of the mirror's upper frame, that is softly met by the prolongation the lines of the mirror's lower frame. The fact that Yermolova's body is trapped between two vanishing points emphasize the feeling of sharp descent and its perception from below; hence Eisenstein's reading of it.

Moreover, the close-up is shot from below not because, as the writer assumed, it is seen "against a horizontal plane, which we know as the ceiling⁶⁶", but rather because the diagonals (D1) and (D2) created by the cornices, both lean downwards to surround Yermolova's chin and collarbone respectively, and to trap her head. This entrapment further emphasizes Eisenstein's perception of her face from below. Serov situated three vanishing points (V1-V2-V3) outside of his painting and two diagonals (D1-D2) along with the main intersection (I1) inside of the composition. This interplay between movement inside of the image and outside of it, animates Yermolova whose body parts are craftily situated between key meeting points, facilitating the perception of various movements within her, while the mimesis of her figure dissimulates the movement tearing up the portrait in different directions.

65 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 87.

66 Ibid.

I interpret the mirror as a link tying the motion inside of the painting to that outside of it in the way it cuts the portrait. It is also the locus of all diagonals and vanishing points and therefore unleashes a force that sways all of Yermolova's bodily elements.

Additionally, when considering Serov's work method, Eisenstein writes that: "I am profoundly convinced that the compositional principle which we have analyzed was not, of course, "consciously" selected but arose for Serov purely intuitively. In no way, however, does this lessen the force of the strict logic of what he did in the composition of his portrait."⁶⁷

By assuming that Serov's working method was unintentional and that he painted Yermolova intuitively, I find that Eisenstein distinguishes his own deliberate montage practice of cutting up the portrait from that of his predecessor. While the director willingly slices Yermolova and puts her back together, Serov, by his use of vanishing points and diagonals before montage cinema had done the same.

I criticize Eisenstein's assumption by relying on the complexity of Serov's composition as I have previously described it, with its vanishing points, diagonals and intersecting lines held together by a strategically placed mirror, whose achievement the director downplays. My art historical analysis proves that Serov's work is not as intuitive as Eisenstein claims that it is and devoid of a conscious choice guiding the creation of the composition. I inversely reckon that behind the movement that the viewer observes in Yermolova, there is a well-thought out and a complex configuration, a careful selection of visual elements, and an overall organization of colors and of lines that are far from being "unconscious". The fact that Serov predates montage cinema and thus did not employ the term "montage" to describe how he operates should in no way diminish the deliberate cognitive and artistic skills needed for such a portrait.

To conclude, resorting to a counter-example to his interest in *Yermolova*, Eisenstein mentions Ivan A. Axionov's (1884-1935)⁶⁸ indifference towards the portrait, saying that he saw "nothing special"⁶⁹ in the picture on the grounds of it resembling Yermolova in real life. I claim that this dispute is important because the meaning it carries encapsulates both the essence of this cinematic painting and others to come.

Cinematic paintings cannot be apprehended as such immediately by the viewer because their image covers the processes needed for their generation. They do not reveal their cinematic nature so easily and so directly to the eye. *Yermolova* thus requires a rather assiduous contemplation before the viewers are finally capable of seeing the hidden mechanism behind her.

This resistance of interpretation is due to the appearance of wholeness and to the figurativeness of the body which upon first glance, makes the portrait seem mimetic and "nothing special". Eisenstein countered this resistance of interpretation uncovering how cinema is buried deep within it and can be exhumed when one is bothered to gaze for longer and use montage as a tool to tear apart the picture, whereas Axionov⁷⁰ could not or would not.

68 Ivan A. Axionov is a poet, art critic and author in 1917 of the first ever monograph on Picasso titled *Picasso et alentours and only reedited in 1998 and translated into French in 2008*. editor: Infolio, Collection, Archigraphy poche. See also: Amaury Payraudeau, « Ivan Axionov, *Picasso et alentours* », *Critique d'art* [En ligne], Toutes les notes de lecture en ligne, mis en ligne le 01 novembre 2013, consulté le 20 novembre 2016. URL : <http://critiquedart.revues.org/5546>

69 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 82

70 I have attempted to trace Axionov's text on Yermolova but did not find it. But for his other theories on theater, see Gérard

Therefore, figurativeness in cinematic paintings plays a contradictory role that simultaneously guarantees the cinematic nature of the painting but it also (momentarily) eclipses the cinematic interpretation. Eisenstein thought of the mimetic unity of the body as a necessary aspect of this cinematic painting but also saw it as a barrier that must be overcome by the onlooker in order to *see* cinema operating *in* the painting. The irresistible power of *Yermolova* invites us to look into her and see beyond her figuration. When doing so art historically, “the whole gamut of dynamic movement” which the director spoke of is traceable into the space outside of the picture which operates as the source of the portrait’s rich motion with its vanishing points and also into the picture itself which manifests intersections serving to highlight specific areas of *Yermolova*.

Furthermore, while examining the link between frame and movement in *Non-Indifferent Nature*, Eisenstein brilliantly rephrases the premise of his cinema and cinematic painting when talking about *The Music of Landscape*, writing that:

“Movement is born from the system of dynamic change of frames that, in its course, engenders the basic cinematographic phenomenon of movement of visual representation so that from a similar comparison of new magnitudes – no longer of frames, but of montage elements -of shots- it will give birth to a whole variety of physical phenomena – the tempo and psychophysical sensation of dynamics. In regard to the actual principle of *continuous flow*, here movies – as the most perfect representation of the art of moving dynamics – unavoidably, as always at the highest stage of development, repeat in a new quality the initial forms of the continuity of the flow of events, as it occurred in the earliest stages of the development of any area of narration or story.”⁷¹

Conio, “Dépassements Constructivistes: Taraboukine, Axionov, Eisenstein”, (Lausanne: L’âge d’Homme, 2011).

Reading this, I recognize that movement is best embodied in film, and since film is the art form that does this best, it inevitably contains more rudimentary forms of movement, such as in painting. Inversely, artworks outside of film can also convey motion as the latter is not exclusive to it, and in some cases through the means of the canvas instead of the camera as Serov's painting testifies. And while, cinematically, Eisenstein predicates that the assembly of *Yermolova's* diverging images within different set-ups owing to the relation of the figure to the background creates an intraconceptual movement, put in art historical terms, it is the multitude of vanishing points in the composition that animates it.

Most significantly for Eisenstein's entire theory, in order for a painting to be apprehended as cinematic, it must deploy within the viewer the same kind of perception that cinema does, as in, the viewer's eye must operate the same fashion when watching a film which for Eisenstein, was persistence of vision.

Both cinematic and art historical readings would agree to a link between the representation of movement and how the eye beholding it moves. But from an art historical perspective, *Yermolova* is not constituted of several images which persistence of vision unites, but rather, it is animated by the vanishing points that Serov chose to include. Instead of offering the viewer only one vanishing point and therefore a single direction towards which their eye may travel, the painter decentralizes the view and does not immediately guide us towards a point, but rather gives us the chance of seeing the portrait from several angles. Eisenstein saw in this

71 Sergei Eisenstein, "The Music of Landscape," in: *Nonindifferent Nature*, ed. Herbert Marshall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 248.

visual freedom the possibility of a 180 degree arch, but I consider this as one path among many others upon which a gaze can travel.

At the heart of Eisenstein's consideration is his willingness to understand human reaction when facing all art works and unlocking the reasons behind such strong feelings lurking in the painting or in the viewer or in both. Movement is a strong catalyst for emotions and the director attempts to break down its constitution and put it back together to unlock its functioning in the case of *Yermolova*. And emotion (of a different sort) remains crucial for his analysis of another cinematic artist, El Greco, as I later examine.

II- EL GRECO

Eisenstein's preoccupation with El Greco began with his 1929 visit to the National Gallery of London where he saw El Greco's *Agony in the Garden* and about which he wrote: "It (the said painting) stood out sharply in the dull rooms...The dark red of the garment cuts like a razor through the greenery...It was

as if I had already *known* it, seen it somewhere.”⁷² *Expulsion of the Traders from The Temple* hangs in the same museum and it later became the subject of Eisenstein’s study.

From 1937 until 1947, he wrote two articles about El Greco’s works: The entry “El Greco” in *Non-Indifferent Nature* (written in 1937, published in 1947) and a second, edited, and much more elaborate text titled “El Greco y el cine” (written between 1939 and 1941, published in Albera’s anthology *Cinématisme*), both testify to Eisenstein’s sustained interest in the painter. Eisenstein posits that El Greco’s entire opus is traversed by cinematic traits that he examines differently from text to text and conceptualizes in reference and at times in opposition to his own function of the image.

The first “El Greco” is a ten-page text with no subdivisions, intercepted only by reproductions of El Greco’s artworks and few digressions. In it, Eisenstein focuses strictly on montage in his paintings and its ecstatic implications, that I later study. The second “El Greco y el cine” is a fifty-page article with untitled subdivisions, abundant digressions, and several references to international painters and art historians. In it, Eisenstein extends the scope of his consideration which is no longer limited to the role of montage but contains two other cinematic *dispositifs*, present in different artworks.

Furthermore, once again in his *Notes for a General History of Cinema* and after mentioning Serov’s Yermolova, Eisenstein cites

El Greco and the elasticity of his figures⁷³, accompanying them with a small drawing. Throughout the same article, he

72 Ronald Bergan, *Eisenstein: A Life in Conflict*, (New York: The Overlook Press, 1999), 169.

distributes fragmented ideas about the Spanish paintings which he previously expressed more coherently in the aforementioned two articles. This elasticity, as I will argue, refers to a montage operation juxtaposing different moments in the same action along various body parts; an attribute which Eisenstein would explore in depth in relation to Jean-Martin Charcot.

Still in *Notes*, Eisenstein places El Greco in the section of "Cinema in the System of the Arts", integrating him in "A short overview of the history of expressive means."⁷⁴ He also puts his painting *View of Toledo* in the section of "Re-montage [peremontazh] of a phenomenon through photomontage"⁷⁵ and briefly mentions that "In El Greco there are two variants of Christ praying in the orchard of Gethseman 232 A B and B A (drw.) and (drw.)."⁷⁶ Moreover, he revitalizes the argument regarding El Greco's use of a 28 mm camera lens, writing that: "Hyperbolicization of the foreground in the manner of El Greco – Degas – Lautrec (The General Line par excellence* [in French], camera lens 28) [mm]. Here there already is a bifurcation of the foreground and the background by means of the abnormal presentation of their correlation."⁷⁷

I examine the more elaborate grounding of the paintings and arguments which Eisenstein mentions in *Notes* while relying on his two previous articles "El Greco" and "El Greco y el Cine" which are essential in shedding light on his approach to El Greco.

Given the methodological differences between these articles, their arduous and fragmented nature, as well as the presence of overlapping ideas between them, I consider them both as equal interlocutors in my examination. Nonetheless, I

73 Sergei Eisenstein, *Notes for a General History of Cinema*, ed.N. I. Kleiman, and Antonio Somaini. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam university press, 2016), 139.

74 Eisenstein, *Notes*, 143

75 Ibid.,144

76 Ibid.,198

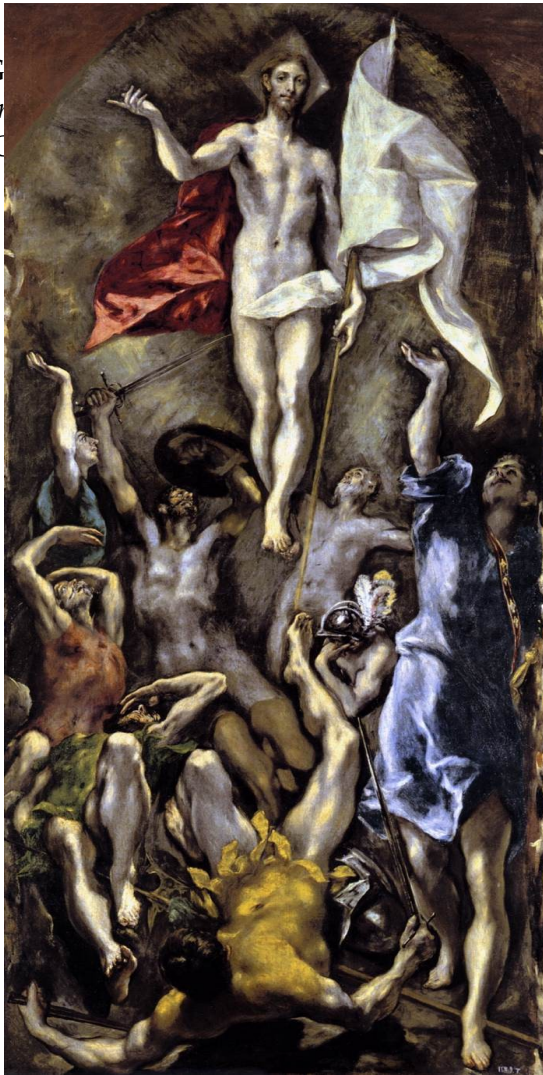
77 Ibid.,220

reorganize their content around the artworks Eisenstein mentions as well as around the arguments he uses to ascertain their cinematic components. In doing so, I remain sensitive to the changes and development in his writings on art history from text to text.

The first group of paintings that Eisenstein considers in his initial “El Greco” is the transformation of *Expulsion of the Moneylenders from the Temple* (1600-5) (ill.3) into *Resurrection from the Grave* (1597-1604) (ill.4). Since this article contains several digressions, I bring to the surface its main idea, starting with Eisenstein’s preliminary considerations about the totality of El Greco’s work, confronting his use of ecstasy with my own art historical approach, in order to affirm my dual Janus model. Furthermore, I focus on his unecstatic interpretation of *Expulsion*, to which he would later return and examine the role of repetition in it.



III.2: El Greco
*Christ driving the
traders from the
temple*
National C



*Christ driving the
traders from the
temple*
1580 x 129.7 cm,

Ill. 3: El Greco, Resurrection, ca. 1596-1600, Oil on Canvas, 275 x 127 cm, Museo del Prado (Madrid).

4. *The Expulsion of the Moneylenders from the Temple*

Similarly to what Eisenstein experienced with Yermolova, the catalyst of his analysis of El Greco's work is a feeling, but this time not of admiration or attraction as with the portrait of the Russian actress, but of a strong sense of irritation when gazing at *Expulsion*. Eisenstein seeks the compositional factors responsible for this sensation⁷⁸.

78 Sergei Eisenstein, "El Greco," in: *Nonindifferent Nature*, ed. Herbert Marshall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 112.

4.1. *Unecstatic*

His irritation leads him to revise not the troublesome artwork alone, but the whole of El Greco's opus and to divide his art between "ecstatic" and "unecstatic" periods to which the four variants of *The Expulsion*⁷⁹ roughly belong, writing that: "This picture (*The Expulsion of the Moneylenders*) irritates me because, even in its most popular third variant, it on the whole continues to retain all the features characteristic of the *pre-ecstatic* period of El Greco's painting."⁸⁰

When considering *Expulsion* as a series, Eisenstein sees the gradual unfolding of ecstasy in its depiction of moving bodies, as in the people surrounding Jesus Christ, writing that: "Even comparing the first variant of the *Expulsion* with the last, it is possible within the composition – in the treatment of the movement of the figures and even more in the painting technique itself- to trace the principle of "ecstasy" quite clearly."⁸¹ He also remarks that a transition from un-ecstatic to ecstatic is visible in them because El Greco re-conceived each scene in order to better bring out its essence, by changing the way he painted his figures⁸². In fact, what Eisenstein does analyze here is the posture of the represented figures and their relationship to each other as well as to their surroundings, as in the relationship of the whole to the part, shedding light on how they differ from painting to painting⁸³. But he sees the figures' re-conception as half-hearted,

79 There are 7 variants of the *Expulsion*, but the ones Eisenstein examines are the ones in the collection of San Francis Cook, one in Minneapolis, one in the National Gallery of London, which is the one Eisenstein mentions as irritating, and one in the Frick Collection.

80 Eisenstein, "El Greco", 112.

81 Eisenstein, "El Greco", 113.

82 Ibid.

83 Lorente and García , *El Greco en el Cine*, 288.

because it does not transform the whole of the composition, but only a part of it. For this reason, it falls short from fully communicating ecstasy.

When considering *Expulsion* from the National Gallery of London as a single painting, Eisenstein is not shy about expressing the boredom this unecstatic painting makes him feel. To rid himself of his aesthetic distaste, he uses a method to liberate the forms drawn by El Greco and “ecstaticizes it in the unique spirit and manner of El Greco,”⁸⁴ without defining how is El Greco’s spirit unique, nor what constitutes his manner. He claims that this *Expulsion* needs a “leap from a narrative interpretation into a figurative interpretation (...) in the given case is expressed only in an inner “reconstruction” of the elements of the picture. The picture *as a whole* does not undergo genuine “ecstasy”, a genuine explosion in the process.”⁸⁵

In order to make this leap possible, he starts with the *Expulsion*’s horizontal format which he describes as a “boring horizontal rectangular format of the picture, balanced and impersonal in its proportions.”⁸⁶ He then moves on to editing the figure of Christ into a more angry one. He gently exaggerates the expression of the figure left to the Christ, the old man on the right, the masses beholding this scene and changes their posture by bending backwards in order to express the “idea of an ecstatic explosion to the extreme, a rapture of the “bond of time” upward and downward, two figures would burst from the center of the picture: one – the hero- head upward toward the sky, and the other – the figure

84 Ibid., 115.

85 Ibid., 115.

86 Eisenstein, “El Greco”, 115.

of the opponent – also vertical, but “mirror image” toward the earth, downward.”⁸⁷

Eisenstein is also so bored with the theme of the painting that he even decides to change it altogether “into something from the cycle of clearly wonder-working events from the pages of the biblical biography of the central character of the scene,”⁸⁸ into the scene of Christ’s resurrection.

Once he does that, Eisenstein realizes that El Greco has used his exact same method, and transformed his very own *Expulsion* into another artwork, precisely into *Resurrection from the Grave* (1597-1604). Eisenstein then asks, “how was such a “a trick” possible of juxtaposing two apparently randomly chosen pictures from the gallery of works of the great Spanish-Greek master of the past? Two pictures, of which the second actually seemed like an explosion, into which the first burst along the line of all its basic features? It turned out to be possible because each of these pictures – each in its own way- is truly a precise imprint of two different phases of the creative condition and development that relate to each other as an explosion and the static state preceding it.”⁸⁹

I pause here and highlight a change in Eisenstein’s opinion about the *Expulsion* series expressed in his later article “El Greco y el Cine”, later analyzing the shift in Eisenstein’s perception of the artwork.

4.2. Mechanical Repetition

87 Ibid., 116

88 Ibid.

89 Eisenstein, “El Greco”, 118.

In his later article “El Greco y el Cine”⁹⁰, Eisenstein returns to the *Expulsion* series, this time with less boredom, retaining an interesting aspect from them; El Greco’s gesture of repetition of the same painting and of the same composition.

Eisenstein asserts that the painter’s aim is not to create another variation of the same artwork, but to repeat it exactly as it is, writing that: “On sait qu’aucun peintre n’a jamais à ce point reproduit la même toile que ne le fit le Greco. Sans compter qu’il ne s’agissait *pas* de variations sur un seul et même thème, mais de la *simple répétition* du même tableau, de la même composition. Les infractions à cette règle sont rares -, elles ne sont presque jamais dictées par une révision du tableau. (...) Cela apparaît de manière particulièrement évidente dans des oeuvres telles que Les Marchands chassés du Temple.”⁹¹

Eisenstein then cites Danish painter Jens Ferdinand Willumsen (1863-1953) who spent most of his life in France, and discovered El Greco during his time in Spain between 1910-1912⁹², pointing out Willumsen’s contribution as having been the first to notice the existence of what he calls “personnages découpés du Greco;”⁹³ figures copied in

90 Sergei Eisenstein, “El Greco y el Cine”, in *Cinematisme : peinture et cinéma*, ed. Francois Albera, (Dijon: Les Presses du reel, 2009), 66-125.

91 Sergei Eisenstein, “El Greco y el Cine”, in *Cinematisme : peinture et cinéma*, ed. Francois Albera, (Dijon: Les Presses du reel, 2009), 79. (my emphasis)

92 The exact reference to Willumsen’s work is: Jens-Ferdinand Willumsen, *La Jeunesse du peintre El Greco. Essai sur la transformation de l’artiste byzantin en peintre européen*, 2 vols. (Paris, Crès, 1927).

93 Eisenstein, “El Greco y el Cine”, 80

numerous compositions. When globally considering this repetition throughout El Greco's oeuvre, Willumsen speaks of "reproduction machinale" which he chooses to exclude from the European art historical-tradition, aligning it to a byzantine practice stemming from El Greco's work as an icon painter reproducing the same forms he created: "Certains sujets comme *Saint Francois en extase*, on été peints par lui jusqu'à dix fois de la même manière; au total il a représenté ce saint environ soixante fois. Cette reproduction machinale, on pourrait dire cette fabrication [le terme cinématographique de copies tirées en masse s'agite malicieusement dans nos pensées!, S.M.E] est byzantine, non européenne⁹⁴." Furthermore, Willumsen sees in this copying and its misalignment on the canvas the work of an infant who does not adjust his cut-out figures to the necessity of each new composition.⁹⁵

Opposing Willumsen, Eisenstein does not concede to the oriental influence on El Greco which drove him to repeat his works because what interests him in the act of reproduction is the complete lack of attention to scale, to the canvas size and to the adaptation of the picture to its new frame. An example of this is the man on the right hand side of the viewer in *Resurrection*, whose half is protrudes out of the painting⁹⁶.

Consequently, Eisenstein's considering of *Expulsion* within the cinematic face of Janus shifts from unecstatic and uncinematic to mechanical. As for the art historical face of Janus, repetition "remained a constant method of production throughout El Greco's career,"⁹⁷ helping him rapidly spread his artworks on high demand since "the painter produced models

94 Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 79.

95 Ibid.,81

96 Lorente and García , *El Greco en el Cine*, 289.

97 Andrew R Casper, *Art and the Religious Image in El Greco's Italy* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 56.

serving as official versions to be reused and copied on demand—something akin to a factory showroom.”⁹⁸

I find that the change in Eisenstein’s views on *Expulsion* from unecstatic to mechanical relies on a distinction between the image as such and the process that leads to it. It is El Greco’s act of reproducing the image in a factory-like way, similarly to the copying a film numerous times (copies tirées en masse) that Eisenstein sees as mechanical and cinematic. Nevertheless, although *Expulsion* itself is part of this process, it fails to convey ecstasy because it lacks specific compositional factors which are present in its ecstatic counterpart *Resurrection*. A cinematic method of generating image is not automatically conducive to an ecstatic image.

In the next part of my study, I answer the question: “What are the compositional factors that changed between *Expulsion* and *Resurrection* and made *Resurrection* cinematic?” By isolating and analyzing these factors, I shed light on the specific elements which Eisenstein relies on when incurring a transformation of an artwork from non-cinematic to cinematic.

5. *The Resurrection From the Grave*

Eisenstein’s insistence on a different format for the artwork constitutes the first change between the horizontal *Expulsion* and the vertical *Resurrection*, and thereby the first compositional factor allowing for a cinematic expression.

98 Andrew R Casper, *Art and the Religious Image in El Greco’s Italy*, 58.

5.1. Format

The newly-imposed format is founded on his 1930 essay *The Dynamic Square*⁹⁹, which he completed in Mexico relying on his speech about the wide screen size innovations in Hollywood¹⁰⁰. In this lecture, he rejects cinema's bias for the horizontal and the 4:3 frame borrowed from the theater and from painting and fears that future films would only recreate this proscenium space. He bemoans their "passive horizontalism"¹⁰¹ relying on the human eye's ability to look wider than it is high, only serving to exile half of the composition from the screen due to the absence of vertical elements. He argues for the framelessness of artworks from Asia, such as Chinese picture scrolls and Japanese woodblock prints by highlighting the importance of vertical imagery¹⁰². He favors square-shaped shots, not only in opposition to horizontality, but also thanks to their potential to embrace the conflict between the horizontal and the vertical in equal quality¹⁰³. Since the square embraces the conflict which horizontality obliterates, Eisenstein sees it as more cinematic

Consequently, Eisenstein requires the same trait from his films and from his cinematic paintings: *Resurrection* uses a format which facilitates the workings of cinema within it, allowing for 'mirror images' to reflect the visual elements present in one half of the composition into the other half, with the figures moving both upward and downward, and never horizontally. Its

99 Sergei Eisenstein, "The Dynamic Square", in: *Writings, 1922-1934: Sergei Eisenstein Selected Works, Volume 1*, ed. Richard Taylor, (London: I.B Tauris, 2010), 206-218.

100 James Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema, and History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 130.

101 Eisenstein, "The Dynamic Square", 207.

102 Ibid., 212.

103 Ibid., 208.

vertical and conflict-filled arrangement of visual elements makes it dynamic and cinematic, whereas a horizontal and conflict-free arrangement in *Expulsion* makes it boring and unecstatic.

Furthermore, this change in format between the two paintings mirrors a change in El Greco's biography: Eisenstein states that El Greco was an artist no different from his contemporaries, but he stepped "into the inimitable area of unique, individual, unrepeatable ecstatic painting, in the transition of El Greco from the epoch of youth to the epoch of creative perfection. And therefore the "miracle" of a similar dynamic juxtaposition of two different works of his, from different stages of his creativity turns out to be quite possible."¹⁰⁴

Expulsion is at the beginning of El Greco's creative stage whereas *Resurrection* is at its end. It is their march towards ecstasy that makes grouping them together possible. The end justifies the means. Historically, this creative stage takes place between 1600 (date of *Expulsion* at the National Gallery in London) and the *Resurrection* (at the Prado Museum) dated between 1597-1598, and alternatively 1600-1605. While investigating this period in the painter's life (ca. 1597-1605), I discover that this time frame falls after El Greco's stay in Rome where he studied to be a miniature painter at the Academy of Saint Luke, and closer to his move to Toledo in July 1577 and the establishment of his workshop in 1585¹⁰⁵ after not having received royal sponsoring from Philip II in

¹⁰⁴ Eisenstein, "El Greco", 119.

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Brown and Richard G. Mann, *Spanish Paintings of the Fifteenth through Nineteenth Centuries*, (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1990), 42.

Madrid. El Greco used commissions for his workshops to reflect upon compositional problems and representations: "After the completion of the painting (The Burial of Count Orgaz), some ten years were to elapse before, in 1596, he was again given any comparable commissions. It was nevertheless a period of great activity, in which he was engaged on a host of smaller commissions. In this decade he formulated his repertoire of subjects and worked out their individual interpretation¹⁰⁶." In this period, he created pictorial and sculptural ensembles for religious institutions such as: The three altars for the Chapel of San Jose in Toledo (1597-1599); three paintings (1596-1600) for the Colegio de Dona Maria de Aragon, an Augustinian monastery in Madrid for which he painted Resurrection, and the high altar, four lateral altars, and the painting St. Ildefonso for the Capilla Mayor of the Hospital de la Caridad (Hospital of Charity) at Illescas (1603-1605)¹⁰⁷.

I find that Eisenstein tightly links a qualitative shift in the painter's work, from non-cinematic to cinematic to the artist's biography. Same as he briefly mentioned that Serov's obsession with his portraits drove him to sickness, El Greco's work zeal drove him to new compositional experimentations, focusing on the cinematic vertical format. The introduction of cinema into a painting is thus not inherent to the artwork but rather functions as the result of the artist's intervention, which Eisenstein's gaze recaptures.

5.2. Theme

Other than its dynamic format, *Resurrection*, with its emphasis on transformation as theme, lends itself to the use of cinematic dispositif; thus constituting a second compositional

106 Philip Troutman, *El Greco*, (New York: Marboro Books, 1963), 16.

107 Jonathan Brown and Richard G. Mann, *Spanish Paintings*, 42.

factor leading Eisenstein to interpret it as “cinematic painting”: The transformation of Jesus from the realm of the dead into that of the living, and the change in the nature of his decaying body into a resurrected soul is in accordance with Eisenstein’s writings about ecstasy which he interprets literally as “being beside oneself” or “going out of a normal state”. Eisenstein writes: “To be beside oneself is unavoidably also a transition to something else, to something different in quality. . . . to be out of the usual balance and state, to move to a new state.”¹⁰⁸ Jesus leaves one state of his body and is transformed into another being and this moment of transition from one state to another imposes a leap in the power of the image, changing it from illustrative and literal to metaphoric.

In opposition to *Resurrection*’s ecstatic theme, *Expulsion* narratively illustrates a scene in the life of Jesus which the Church used in order to prove the need for self-reform and the cleansing of heretics from its midst in the 16th century, as Eisenstein affirms by quoting art historian Enriqueta Harris: “Before the Reformation, *The Purification of the Temple* (aka *The Expulsion*) was normally treated as one of the series of scenes from the Life, or from the Passion, of Christ. After the Reformation, however, the story acquired a new importance. Protestants compared it with their own reforming activities; and to the Catholics of the Counter-Reformation it symbolized the purging of the Church of heresy. El Greco’s interest in the subject, and his interpretation of it, are certainly connected with these ecclesiastical controversies. In this earliest version he is mainly intent on telling the story as set out in the Gospel.

108 Sergei Eisenstein, “Organic Unity and Pathos,” in: *Nonindifferent Nature*, ed. Herbert Marshall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 27.

In the National Gallery picture, however, he is more preoccupied with its symbolical meaning."¹⁰⁹

But the elements of *Resurrection* are arranged so as to incite the spectators of Christ's transformation to stand in awe at his majesty metaphorically contained in the image, causing "a transport out of understanding -- a transport out of conceptualization -- a transport out of imagery -- a transport out of the sphere of any rudiments of consciousness whatever in the sphere of 'pure' effect, feeling, sensation, state,"¹¹⁰ thereby incurring ecstasy.

Consequently, the theme has the power of dictating the image's composition and ultimately its cinematic quality. *Expulsion* illustrates its theme and invites a more narrative organization of visual elements, expressed by a horizontal theatrical format. The function of the image in it is narrative and thereby not cinematic. Whereas *Resurrection* transforms its theme and invites a more dynamic organization of visual elements, expressed by a vertical cinematic format. The function of the image in it is metaphorical. It is made, visually and thematically, to incur strong feelings same as Serov designed Yermolova to provoke admiration, a power which is absent from its counterpart.

5.3. *Pathos and ecstasy*

Overall, I find that throughout his study of *Expulsion* and *Resurrection* in both "El Greco" and "El Greco y el Cine", Eisenstein asserts his willingness to locate the reason behind his

109 Eisenstein, "El Greco", 113-114.

110 Sergei Eisenstein, "On the Question of Supra History," in:

Nonindifferent Nature, ed. Herbert Marshall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 179

reaction to an artwork, not in his own psychological disposition, but rather in the organization of the visual elements of the composition, which incurs specific feelings in the viewer. In the case of El Greco's *Expulsion*, the feeling is boredom whereas in the case of *Resurrection*, the feeling is dynamism. This strategy likewise characterizes his text on Serov's *Yermolova* and the feeling of admiration the portrait generates which motivates Eisenstein's text. But he uses different terms in relation to the Cretan painter: Ecstasy and pathos.

Eisenstein uses the concept of "ecstasy" in cinematic paintings two ways:

Firstly, as an art historical canon periodicizing El Greco's entire oeuvre exemplified by the confrontation between *Expulsion* and *Resurrection*. Consequently, ecstasy operates as an umbrella term referencing an image's impact on the viewer; their ability to exit their bodies, or lack of it thereof, and within it are contained specific compositional factors and biographical details.

Secondly, as an agent of alteration of the function of the image whenever its effect is detectable in the viewer. The presence of ecstasy in *Resurrection* and not in *Expulsion* refers to two different modes of operation of the artworks; the first metaphorical and the second narrative. Nevertheless, the possibility of transforming an un-ecstatic image into an ecstatic one means that a painting can transcend the limitations of its storytelling, conveying a dimension beyond it that the viewer is included in, leading them to exit their bodies. The possibility of this transformation strictly depends on the intervention of the artist and his reshuffling of the compositional elements such as the format and is accompanied by a certain change in their biography.

Consequently, ecstasy works as a ladder leading the audience towards another and much higher aesthetic function of the image.

Furthermore, in “El Greco”, Eisenstein also briefly asks: “Is a similar experiment of transforming a painting in whole and in part possible in the works of any other artists?¹¹¹”, questioning the limits of his transformation of one painting into another. He answers it by inserting a new condition to the success of his method which was absent from his text on Yermolova and decrees that the artist must communicate Pathos for ecstasy to be achievable. But throughout *Non-Indifferent Nature*, Eisenstein circumvents defining this Pathos. It remains a notion that is not easily pinned down for what it is but demonstrable through what it does. I also recognize that the mention of Pathos in relation to El Greco, substitutes the mysterious inner power which Eisenstein spoke of in regards to Yermolova which makes the audience admire her in several media; on stage and on canvas, but they are both quite similar. The inner power and the Pathos are both an unidentifiable pull that an image contains which causes a radical and swift changes from state to state in the audience enabling them to reach a higher level of complexity by experiencing ecstasy, enabling both the artwork and its beholder.

Pathos is on the side of the image, ecstasy on the side of the audience.

6. *An art historical transformation*

After having surveyed the cinematic face of Janus in relation to *Expulsion* and *Resurrection*, I turn to the an art historical approach, comparing the two paintings: Firstly element

111 Eisenstein, “El Greco”, 119

by element (The figure of Christ, the figure left to Christ in yellow, the old man on the right, the masses, and the theme), secondly by examining the way Eisenstein “transformed” them, and thirdly, by elucidating the potential thematic differences which may have driven the director towards his preference of *Resurrection*. My aim here is the same as with Yermolova: To confront Eisenstein’s cinematic interpretation of a pre-filmic painting with an art historical reading, thereby juxtaposing two modes of interpretation and allow them to critically comment on each other.

By making my own montage and placing the elements extracted from the artworks side by side, and knowing that El Greco “mechanically” reproduced most of his artworks in whole and in parts, I highlight how exactly did this repetition take place:

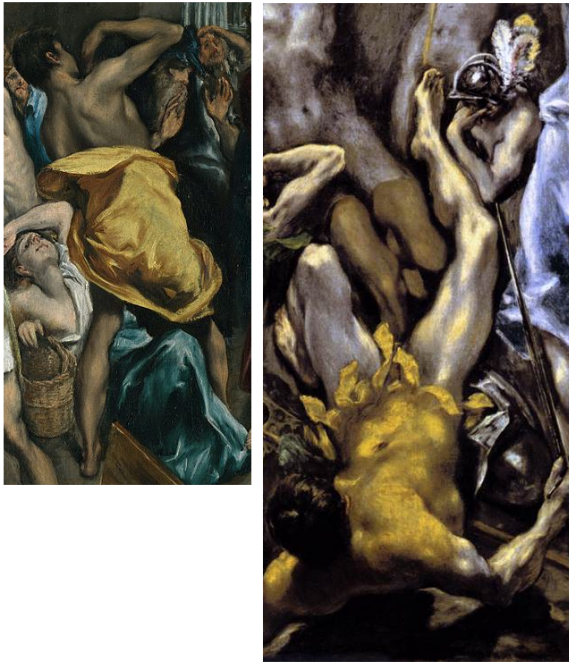
- When comparing the two close-ups I took of Jesus from both *Expulsion* and *Resurrection* (Group 1), I reckon that El Greco repeated the face as it is, with the same parting of the hair, the straight nose, the big round eyes, and the beard. The difference is that while Jesus’ arm covers his torso as he is preparing himself to use his whip in *Expulsion*, his arm is gently open in a gesture of benevolence in *Resurrection*. And while he is traditionally clothed in red and blue in the first painting, he is naked in the second, except for the white banner in his left hand symbolizing the triumph over death, along with his purple robe referring to sacrifice and martyrdom, crowned by a byzantine halo¹¹².

112 “The Resurrection”, Museo del Prado, last modified October 10th 2016, accessed February 13th 2017, <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-resurrection/2267dcd8-2b87-43b7-8104-0fb5070c4b5c>



III.4: Group 1: Jesus in *Expulsion* (left) and *Resurrection* (right).

- As for the figure in yellow left of Christ in *Expulsion* and laying on the ground in *Resurrection* (Group 2), I confirm that El Greco repeated the figure wearing the same cloak.



Ill.5: Group 2: Man in yellow cloak in *Expulsion* (left) and *Resurrection* (right).

- The old man on the right of Christ (the Apostle) crouching on the ground in *Expulsion* is transformed, according to the article, into the young man bending slightly backwards in the foreground in *Resurrection* (Group 3): “The old man on the right, not very expressive, phlegmatic, having propped up his cheek, looking at what is occurring almost right next to him, would, of course, begin to expand to the

height of the powerful figure of youth."¹¹³ I see no repetition of the same motifs here because the figures are too different. This is Eisenstein's own contribution.



Ill.6: Group 3: Old man and young man in *Expulsion* (left) and *Resurrection* (right).



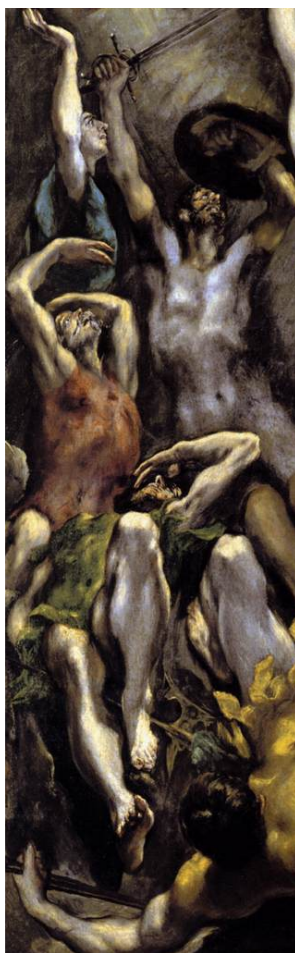
- As for the masses in both pictures, Eisenstein writes that " Finally -"the masses"- from

113 Eisenstein, "El Greco", 116.

the group of regularly placed mannequins would inevitably have to burst into a chaos of torsos, knees, elbows, forearms, and thighs, spread along the canvas of the picture and interwoven with each other¹¹⁴. This approach fails to determine that this group of people is far from being a homogeneous mass. In fact, their positions on both sides of Christ is a carefully constituted opposition between the Apostles on the right hand side of the viewer and the traders on the left hand side of the viewer¹¹⁵. The traders which the director finds anew in *Resurrection* are not meant to be there since according to all four gospels they were not present during the event. This reasserts Eisenstein's statement about the mechanical reproduction in El Greco's paintings since he simply copied the figures as such, irrelevant of religious connotation.

114 Ibid.

115 "Christ driving the Traders from the Temple", The National Gallery of London, accessed February 13th 2017, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/el-greco-christ-driving-the-traders-from-the-temple>



Ill. 7: Group 4: The masses in *Expulsion* (left) and *Resurrection* (right).

When I look at both paintings, I see that those to the right of Jesus in *Expulsion* are absent from *Resurrection*, whereas those on his left are divided as such (Group 4): The carrier of the

basket in *Expulsion*, contorts his body more in *Resurrection* to carry a sword and its shield. The man next to him in green turning away from the viewer in the first painting is brought to the foreground in the second and lays foreshortened on the ground draped in a similar shade of green. And lastly the man in red bending over and hiding his face in the first picture bears his torso with his arms above him in the second picture. The color of his outfit is a similar shade of red but the white shirt which he wore in *Expulsion* is absent from *Resurrection*. El Greco repeated these figures and only slightly edited them.

After having compared both of these elements, my conclusion is that in the *Expulsion*, the size of the figures is relatively large in comparison to the space around them; an attribute of El Greco's reproduction technique. They are also brought forth to the picture plane and bathed in a cold tone that adds to the tension of the image¹¹⁶. More specifically, the organization of the visual elements in this painting denies the viewer the liberty to confront the protagonists, to make eye contact, and to exchange with them: Jesus blocks his own body with his arms as he readies himself to use his whip, the man in yellow next to him has his back to the viewer and defends himself, the old man in blue and yellow to his right is on his knee, the man in red and green frustrate the spectators by refusing to view them.

But the gestures both in terms of body posture and in terms of relation to the spectator in *Resurrection* are more open, elongated in the Byzantine manner owing to El Greco's training as an icon painter of the Cretan school, are bolder in color, bathed in a high-contrast light, dramatically accompanied by swirling textiles: Bodies are contorted to get a

116 Jonathan Brown and Richard G. Mann, *Spanish Paintings*, 70.

better view of Jesus emerging out of the dead; a scene so powerful that the two figures of the guards in red and green shield their faces away by the use of their arms, the figure in yellow is foreshortened and succeeds in the illusion of being projected out of the space of the canvas and into the space of the viewer. The body of Christ and that of the man in blue appear contorted and their stretched torsos and necks emphasize the force of these scenes. The space is completely unrecognizable where Christ seems to continue his ascend to heaven. All of these visual strategies generate a sense of movement that is “not dissipated but is contained and concentrated. The figures now are vehicles of movement and light”¹¹⁷.

7. *Storm over Toledo*

After Eisenstein’s examination of the transformation of a non-cinematic *Expulsion* to a cinematic *Resurrection* with a more dynamic format, a more cinematic theme and different depiction of figures, I focus on his study of a pair of paintings of Toledo: *Views and Plan of Toledo* aka *View and Map of Toledo* at the El Greco Museum in Toledo (1608) and *Storm over Toledo* at the Metropolitan Museum of Arts (1598-99).

Considerations around these artworks are scattered throughout both “El Greco” and “El Greco y el cine” where he writes that they constitute a: „l’approche nouvelle iconique d’un paysage urbain et la création eidétique d’un paysage naturelle”¹¹⁸, as in they demonstrate a similarity between what the landscape looks like and how it is mentally apprehended by the painter¹¹⁹.

117 Troutman, *El Greco*, 35.

118 Eisenstein, “El greco y el cine”, 67.

119 Jonathan Rayner and Graeme Harper recently examined the rapport between the two art forms in their *Cinema and Landscape* (2010). They

Scattered throughout *Non-Indifferent Nature* are several references to the Toledos that are not integrated into the article dedicated to the painter. I reorganize both his textual and the extra-textual reflections around arguments as to why *Storm over Toledo* is the most cinematic of the two.

7.1. Level of subjectivity

The first factor in *Storm over Toledo* making it cinematic deals with the level of subjectivity it entails, a factor to which Eisenstein returned over and over again:

provide accounts of the use of landscape in the cinema and the changes brought upon by film to the perception of nature and of modernization, but their mention of Eisenstein is reduced to his work on *The General Line* (1929). They mention briefly “the power of the cinema to animate space that both freezes it in time yet endows it with timeless mobility”. They also predicate ontological similarities between the production of a film and that of a landscape (as opposed to raw nature) since they both rely on the extraction out of reality, elements deemed significant or inspirational for and within the socio-cultural context of the artwork. Also, by toying with what is constructed and what is found as is, cinematic landscapes offer several views of the world, guided by the functioning of the frame encompassing them all. Nevertheless, what they fail to point out is the way in which these processes used by landscape painting are special in regards to portraits, historical painting etc. Does not the act of creating an artwork imply, by default, a selection of relevant elements either to the painter or to whoever has commissioned it?

In “El Greco”, Eisenstein asserts that acting is the most subjective art form since it merges the artist (actor/actress) with the object that is seen (his/her own performance). He considers painting and literature “semi-subjective” since they imply a relationship of distance between object and creator. He considers the tension in the relationship between artwork and artist to be the reason for the success of El Greco’s *Storm over Toledo*, writing that: “The subjective, ecstatic dissolution of him [El Greco] in the apparently “objective” landscape – this is what makes his *Storm over Toledo* so striking and captivating.”¹²⁰ Elsewhere in *Non-Indifferent Nature*, he writes “actually, the huge collection of self-portraits – clear and unclear, right up to the projection of states of his [El Greco’s] own soul into tangible forms of threatening landscapes (*Storm over Toledo*).”¹²¹ He also states that he finds that *Storm over Toledo* is “the first independent landscape in the whole history of painting – simultaneously remaining the almost unsurpassed example of a stormily emotional landscape. (...) It is here that, in the features of its youth, it naturally corresponds to the stage of the origin of a similar phenomenon, in the first stages of development of cinematography as an independent art.”¹²² Elsewhere in the same text, Eisenstein defines what makes a landscape emotional: “Everywhere the emotional landscape turns out to be an image of the mutual absorption of man and nature one into the other. And in this particular sense, the action principle of emotional landscape bears the imprint of the inspiration of *Pathos*. And it is characteristic in the West one of the first “pure” landscapes, that is, one from where for the first time the real representation of human semblance has slipped away, and out of all the examples that have come down to us, is

120 Eisenstein, “El Greco”, 120.

121 Sergei Eisenstein, “The Lion in Old Age,” in: *Nonindifferent Nature*, ed. Herbert Marshall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 110.

122 Eisenstein, “The Music of Landscape”, 227.

possibly the most ardent self-portrait of the “soul” of a human being – its creator. This is El Greco’s *Storm over Toledo*.¹²³

My interpretation of these ideas is that *Storm* is subjective because it merges El Greco as a painter, with his object of creation; the painting itself, with nature, thus achieving such a high level of unity that it transcends the semi-subjective nature of its medium. For this reason, it merits being considered the first landscape painting in which the scenery is not merely a backdrop but an actual theme in its own right.

Since Eisenstein theorized that painting is semi-subjective due to the distance between creator and object, then film is either on the same level as painting (also semi-subjective due to the distance between the director and their film), or less subjective than painting due to the mediation of a mechanical eye as opposed to a human hand between the person operating it and what it intends to grasp. El Greco managing to overtake the limits of painting by infusing his representation with his very person implies that film, a likewise semi-subjective medium, can do the same and reach a unity between filmmaker and object.

Moreover, while keeping this line of argumentation and when examining the two Toledos as pair, Eisenstein cites Willumsen again in „El Greco y el cine“ and quotes his analysis of the artworks throughout five pages¹²⁴.

Willumsen starts by describing *View and Map of Toledo* and suggests three ideas:

123 Ibid., 359.

124 Eisenstein, “El greco y el cine”, 68-73.

Firstly, that *View of Toledo* is not painted from a point of view that it exists in real life, but that it is a montage of elements in the city that are photographed independently: „ Cette vue de Tolède n'est possible d'aucun point de vue réel dans l'espace. Cette vue un complexe montée, une représentation composée par montage où intervienne, „photographiés“ isolément, des objets qui, dans la nature, se cachent l'un l'autre ou tournent le dos au spectateur de ce lieu de „prise de vue.“¹²⁵ Secondly, that by combining these photographed elements, El Greco executes a topographic portrait of the city by refusing to use perspective to create the illusion of depth: „Tous les rapports de hauteur sont réels, et non perspectifs.“¹²⁶ Willumsen links this anti-illusionistic gesture to the Byzantine heritage of the painter.¹²⁷ Thirdly, *View of Toledo* is hence staged for the gaze of a spectator curious about the topography of the city and not an art amateur: „Ce n'est pas à un amateur d'art, mais à toute personne qui veut être exactement informée sur la topographie de Tolède.“¹²⁸

Willumsen concludes that El Greco painted in his atelier and not outdoors, without preparatory drawings of the real landscape, because some points of views are impossible, with the aim of narrating the city: „ Mais le Greco a représenté Tolède telle qu'il la connaissait par son séjour de tant d'années et par ses promenades dans les environs (...) Le tableau n'est pas un portrait objectif. On ne peut dire qu'il est subjectif. On pourrait peut-être dire qu'il „raconte“ la ville.“¹²⁹

Eisenstein relies on Willumsen's description of the artworks for his analysis because the paintings were not present in his immediate surroundings, nor had Eisenstein been in

125 Ibid.,69.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.,71.

Toledo.¹³⁰ He agrees with the Danish author that El Greco founded his work on both *View* and on *Storm* on his knowledge and memory rather than on gazing at the city in real life and mimetically transcribing what he saw. He also concurs that the painter did favor the union of several separate motifs as if gathered during one of his promenades in Toledo in both artworks. He likewise asserts that both of them were hence not painted from a single fixed point of view.

But Eisenstein adamantly refuses Willumsen's interpretation of El Greco's montage gesture as being narrative in function in *Storm*, and sees it as rather highly subjective and cinematic. Eisenstein does not concede to the painter having wanted to „raconter la ville“, predicating the existence of an enormous difference between the two version of Toledo, one which Willumsen was not sensitive enough to:

For Eisenstein, *View of Toledo* is indeed „un récit informatif“¹³¹, an account which conveys data about the city, because El Greco had his son write on his painting, as to how he deliberately mis-placed the architectural elements in order to give a better view of the space and so that monuments no longer hide each other. Willumsen recounts this: “Le Greco fait écrire (à son fils): Il a été forcé de placer l'hôpital de Don Joan Tavera sous la forme de/modèle, car non seulement il venait couvrir la porte de Visagra, mais/ sa coupole s'élevait de telle sorte qu'elle surpassait la ville et / ainsi, une fois posé là comme modèle et en dehors de sa place,/ il m'a semblé montrer la façade principale que les autres côtés et on verra d'ailleurs sur le plan/ auelle est sa position par rapport à la ville.”¹³² But *Storm over Toledo* is more subjective to El Greco than its predecessor because it is constituted of elements

130 Lorente and García , *El Greco en el Cine*, 286.

131 Eisenstein, “El greco y el cine”, 72

132 Ibid.,68.

apprehended independently and reunited in an arbitrary inexistent construction from a unique point of view, divorced from the need to provide information as to the location of the city. It is rather perfectly aligned to the inner necessity of the artist which guided his choice of composition, making him merge with his artwork.

Therefore, at the heart of Eisenstein's dispute with Willumsen is the latter's opinion about *Storm over Toledo* being merely narrative, pushing Eisenstein to ask the rhetoric question: „Se peut-il que, plongé dans les détails de son analyse, Willumsen soit passé á côté du plus important – de l'emprise émotive immédiate qui s'exerce avant tout, si forte, dans cette toile?“¹³³

Montage in *Storm over Toledo* allows El Greco to unite himself with his artwork and not to narrate Toledo.

I find that Eisenstein's vivid interest in the level of subjectivity of an artwork which is a central factor in its expression of cinema or its inability to do so, reflects the importance he allocates to the intervention of the artist in his artwork in relation to reality. In both *View and Plan of Toledo* as well as *Storm over Toledo*, El Greco painted the city from several points of views and added them (albeit differently) unto the same canvas, but his manipulation of their order refers to two different levels of subjectivity. In the case of *View*, narrating the city indicates a lesser degree of engagement with the artwork. Whereas in the case of *Storm*, metaphorically representing the city indicates a much higher degree of subjectivity and therefore of cinema.

Another compositional factor likewise plays an important role: El Greco's use of a 28 mm camera lens in the same portrait.

7.2. 28 mm painting

After having written two articles dedicated to the cinematic quality in the work of El Greco, in comparing paintings, in ecstasizing them, in challenging art historians, and reflecting upon the similarities between landscape painting and cinema, it seemed to me at first somewhat odd for Eisenstein to predicate that El Greco on top of all his achievements, also used a 28 mm lens to paint *Storm over Toledo*.

In "El Greco y el cine", it is while comparing the Cretan painter to Valentin Serov that Eisenstein first mentions the use of 28mm lens in painting. He explains that Serov has no propensity for ecstasy and that it is thanks to he unconsciously used of a system of reflections of certain parts of Yermolova's body in relation to the mirror that he manages to fixate, within the composition of the painting, an ecstatic formula that does not disrupt the integrity of the representation¹³⁴. Inversely, he finds that El Greco is in a league of his own and in possession of a madness; "cette folie extatique"¹³⁵ which allows him, instead of using mirror tricks, to alter the very depiction of bodies so as to articulate an ecstatic formula:

"Par le rusé système d'un jeu de reflets, Sérov aboutit (...) à fixer en une composition extrême la "formule de

134 Ibid.,105.

135 Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 105.

l'extase" dans le portrait d'Ermolova, sans porter atteinte à l'intégrité physique de son modèle, le Greco met ses personnages en pièces pour accéder au même but. Il considère certaines parties d'en bas. D'autres de dessus. Les troisièmes – de face. C'est ainsi qu'il contemplait *Tolède sous l'orage*. Et comme sur ce tableau, il rassemble ce qu'il a vu et fixé d'en bas, d'en haut, de face dans ces points de vue en une figure unique de forme impossible dans le réel, et vue, semble-t-il, à travers un miroir déformant. De manière plus exacte. Ce qui n'est ni un jeu de mots ni une tournure verbale. C'est la représentation exacte d'un personnage humain vu non dans un miroir déformant en général, mais exactement à la surface d'un miroir sphérique convexe. Ou par l'effect cinématographique que perment l'objectif 28 mm lorsqu'un objet vertical est posé droit devant lui et qu'il est dirigé vers son centre."¹³⁶

Eisenstein also describes the importance of this camera lens, writing that: "l'effet obtenu à l'aide de cet objectif repose sur un raccourcissement perspectif dans la profondeur, considérablement plus marquée et rapide que pour l'oeil normale(...). Des intérieurs plats se lisent en profondeur. (...) L'objectif 28mm est l'objectif extatique *par excellence* (...) il répond à l'exigence essentielle de l'exstatisme: grâce à ses particularités optiques, il peut réellement donner à la forme la possibilité de sortir d'elle-même, du rapport habituel de sa place dans l'espace réel et la vraie réalité!(...) Il a accès à une autre propriété d'ordre extatique: il résout le problème de la combinaison en un de ce qui, d'un point de vue optique, ne peut normalement être réuni."¹³⁷

The use of the wide lens as an analytical tool applied to El Greco's painting refers to Eisenstein's film practice:

136 Ibid.

137 Ibid.

Firstly, in terms of film practice: Eisenstein had used the 28 mm lens in his film "The Old and the New" aka "The General Line" (1929) for the scene of "Marfa in the Kulak's Courtyard" and "The Bull's Wedding", to emphasize the conflict between the foreground and the shortened background. He also utilized it in "Que Viva Mexico" (1932) to achieve a sense of monumentality "producing the effect of not only carefully constructed frames, but also a vast space outside of the frame"¹³⁸, then in "Bezhin Meadow"(1937), "Alexander Nevsky" (1938) and in "Ivan the Terrible"(1945) to embody states of exaltation and obsession rendered by the deep horizontal space, low ceilings, and claustrophobic indoors¹³⁹.

The 28 mm lens is dear to Eisenstein for two reasons: First of all, thanks to its capability of liberating the form from the fetters of the space it inhabits in reality. By distorting objects, the wide lens allows them to optically exit where they are, literally to "get out of themselves" and overtake the limitations of their frame. Second of all, unlike other camera lenses that can either capture what is very far or very close, the wide angle manages to unite the opposites by simultaneously rendering, in the same image, both the far and the close, thus redeeming the viewer of their inability of inhabiting two different points of views. Consequently, the 28 mm lens is the most cinematic because it does what the human eye fails to achieve; combining the opposites, and referring to an unseen and uninhabited space. It is both conflicting and ecstatic.

138 Masha Salazkina, *In Excess: Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico*, (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2009), 38.

139 James Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History*, (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 215.

On the most elementary level, to prove that El Greco was cinematic all the way, Eisenstein uses the argument of the lens since every cinematographic depiction passes in the process of shooting through an optical instrument -the lens- the character of the design of this image depends on the choice of lens."¹⁴⁰

Furthermore, Eisenstein's interest in this lens and in the deformation that it achieves harks back to Russian art critic Nikolai Tarabukin's writings on camera lenses. Tarabukin wrote several texts dealing with graphic design and photography between 1921 and 1928¹⁴¹ which the Association of Proletarian Cultural Organizations, Proletkult, published in 1925. Eisenstein was part of Proletkult since 1921 and he, along with his co-worker Sergei Tretiakov directed three experimental plays between 1923 and 1924¹⁴², at a time when Tarabukin was working, since 1922, as an instructor in the visual arts studio in Moscow Proletkult. In his article "The Art of the Day: What one needs to know in order to make posters, woodcuts, advertisements, produce books, newspapers, and placards, and what possibilities are opened up by photo-mechanics", Tarabukin presents some ideas which reverberate throughout Eisenstein's 28 mm argument that are worth considering.

Tarabukin predicates that the changes in what is presumed to be a "succession of styles" in painting, emanates from "a change in our ability to see, and expressing what we see

140 Evgeny Mikhailov and Andrei Moskvin, "The Cameraman's Part in Making a Film", *Russian Poetics in Translation, the Poetics of Cinema*, vol.9, (February 1982).

141 Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 149.

142 Mally, *Culture of the Future*, 240. In order of release, the plays are: Ostrovsky's Enough Simplicity for Every Wise Man. Eisenstein and Tretiakov's own "Are you listening, Moscow?", and "Gas Masks".

is in its turn determined by social factors,"¹⁴³ and is similar to the operation of language which is also modified over time. He gives the example of the medieval primitive as not merely an art historical style but also a manner of seeing and bemoans the misalignment of the techniques of producing images and creating artworks with the ways of seeing of the modern man. According to him, photography in the USSR of the 1920s is still naturalistic and needs a radical update in the field of lenses to finally align itself to the modernity it tries to represent:

"More decisive measures must be taken in order to produce not only a bland record, providing a chronicle of reality (naturalistic photography), but also its expression, in which the acute vision of modern man is captured. A radical reform of the way in which the photographic lens perceives reality is needed, in order to create a photograph that under the contemporary conditions of "the ability to see" could respond to the new expectations of modern life and also the demands it presents to graphic expression as a means of visual apperception in the real world."¹⁴⁴ He then turns his consideration to lenses and the spherical aberration that they can generate: "The property of spherical aberration is demonstrated when you get a convex field of vision and the subject appears on more than one plane. The property of a lens that is called astigmatic is further to "distort" the representation of an object from the point of view of stylized naturalistic "verisimilitude."¹⁴⁵

143 Nikolai Tarabukin, "The Art of the Day", *October*, Vol. 93 (Summer, 2000), 65.

144 Tarabukin, "The Art of the Day", 68.

145 Tarabukin, "The Art of the Day", 70.

Secondly, in terms of El Greco specifically: Eisenstein predicates that the painter destroys his representation (met ses personnages en pièces) to reach the point of ecstasy whereas Serov only uses a mirror trick. In *Storm over Toledo*, El Greco not only reassembles several facets of the city, from above, below etc. in a way that is impossible to realize in real life, but he also paints the imprint of the image of the city unto a special mirror.

Similarly, Tarabukin distinguishes in this paragraph between the property of the astigmatic lens and that of its consequence, the spherical aberration: The lens distorts the very object of representation by stylizing it. The consequence of this distortion is the presentation of the object in a convex fashion in several fields of vision. Eisenstein found this attribute to be literally ecstatic; exiting itself, capable of uniting the opposites, both close and far, hence relevant for his film practice and for his use of it as a theoretical dispositif to interpret El Greco.

Therefore, what El Greco renders in his painting is not his own view of the city *through* a deforming device but rather its imprint. He chooses to convey an image through oil on canvas of an image through a convex mirror, and this choice, according to Eisenstein, constitutes a cinematic gesture. With *Storm*, El Greco images the 20th century and its way of seeing which is far from naturalistic in Tarabukin's views, and closer to a spherical aberration in the Soviet Union.

El Greco was able to see like a modern man, represent the world with a modern lens by adapting his vision to its viewpoint, freeing himself from the obligation of reproducing the sight of the human eye. For this reason, he is relevant for modernism and for cinema¹⁴⁶.

146 By extrapolation, I interpret this argument as the opposition to Dziga Vertov's use of the camera in *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929). While the latter lets his camera occupy "inhuman" positions

8. Art historical comparison between *Storm over Toledo* and *View and Plan of Toledo*

Although Eisenstein bases his choice of *Storm over Toledo* as the most cinematic of the two Toledos relying on Willumsen's text and by commenting on each of his ideas separately, I find that he does not tackle the paintings head-on. He relies almost exclusively on Willumsen's quotations with which he either agrees or disagrees and on resorting to the writings of Hugo Kehrer to justify his choice, and much less on a comparison of the two paintings to each other.

After all, they both depict the same city and they both juxtapose several views of it, so based on what, other than an ambiguous inner expressive force inhabiting *Storm* but absent from *View*, is one more cinematic than the other? Although the similarities between them lends itself to a proper comparison, like the one Eisenstein sketched in "El Greco" between *Expulsion* and *Resurrection*, such an endeavor is strangely absent from his newer article.

Same as with Yermolova, I ask both canvases if there are specific elements within them that may have facilitated, incurred or even contradicted Eisenstein's views? Other than

in every shot, and combines these shots to demonstrate a point of view that is distinctly the camera's, El Greco does the opposite by adapting his vision to the point of view of a photographic tool.

answering this question, I hope to explain what did Eisenstein really *see* when he predicated that a painting is cinematic?

But first, I will shed some light on the biographical and contextual change that took place between during the realization of the Toledos (ca.1598-1608), expanding on the previously analyzed time frame. In fact, the year 1606 emerges as quite relevant as it marks El Greco's successful contesting of payment of tax, arguing that he practiced painting as a liberal art, thus marking the first official recognition in Spain of painting as a liberal, and not mechanical art¹⁴⁷. Furthermore, he continued to receive commissions, this time for the decoration of the Chapel of Isabel de Oballe in the Church of San Vicente, Toledo, for which he executed Immaculate Conception, the Visitation for the vault, and the Saint Peter and Saint Ildefonso for the side altars. Also, in 1608, he received a commission for the church of the Hospital of San Juan Bautista (Hospital Tavera) in Toledo itself, for which he designed a tabernacle in 1595. It is the hospital featured in *View and Plan of Toledo*.

I decide to look at the two paintings side by side, this time, while wearing Eisensteinian glasses in order to determine what he discerned or failed to discern in the paintings and to extrapolate on his possible rejection of *View*. Luckily, the paintings can be found on the web in high resolution on their respective museums' websites. Side by side, I realize that:

- *View* is horizontal and it can thus represent for Eisenstein his despised "passive horizontalism", borrowed from the theater which fails to convey conflict and to agitate the spectator's eye, while *Storm* stands proudly erect forcing the viewer to gaze in different directions and not reduce its movement to a horizontal scanning of the canvas. This difference echoes the change of format from *Expulsion* to *Resurrection*.

147 Troutman, *El Greco*, 24.

- *View* fragments the representations of the city and fails to reunite them. In it, El Greco upholds an approach to Toledo that is torn apart and marked by a lack of unity in the depiction: As a space projected on paper, represented by the man on the right hand side of the viewer holding a map of the city that “corrects” the view of Toledo depicted in the painting. As a monument, represented by the modified Hospital of Don Juan Tavera, which was transferred from its actual setting at a vantage point which turns the monument, allowing us to gaze upon its facade without it blocking other significant monuments, upon a cloud that carries it out of space and time. As a sign of abundance, see the allegory of the river Tagus on a balustrade laying down with its jar of water and horn of fruits¹⁴⁸. As a religious site visible above the city in the image of the Virgin presenting a vestment to St Ildefonso. As a text through the annotations added by the painter himself addressing the spectator who is meant to read the accompanying inscription in which El Greco describes his choice of organization of visual elements.

But the painter does not unite them in a single image for us to experience them simultaneously. Since these views remain fragmented and displayed upon a horizontal surface, our eye has to move horizontally over time in order to apprehend each element one by one, similar to architecture. The promenade which El Greco invites us to in this case is architectural and not cinematic in nature.

Inversely, *Storm* unites conflicting representations of the city under the umbrella of a sinister weather threatening *all* its views: “This (*Storm over Toledo*) is one of the earliest

148 “View and Plan of Toledo”, Museo del Prado, accessed February 13th 2017, <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/whatson/exhibition/view-and-plan-of-toledo/6a197a6b-add5-4dae-ab96-a8cf2b0901c0>

independent landscapes in Western art and one of the most dramatic and individual landscapes ever painted. It is not just a 'View of Toledo', although the topographical details are correct; neither is it 'Toledo at night' or 'Toledo in a Storm', other titles which have been attached to the painting: it is simply 'Toledo', but Toledo given a universal meaning — a spiritual portrait of the town. In introducing the view into his paintings he acknowledges how much his art owed to the inspiration of the town, until a few years before the great Imperial Capital and still the great ecclesiastical and cultural center of Spain the town isolated on the plain of Castile which he had made his new home, so far from the island of his birth¹⁴⁹."

All of the images buried within Toledo are gathered unto a single vertical canvas that retains, like Yermolova, a sense of unity. It allows us to capture, on the spot, various prospects of the same space which are at odds with one another. Indeed, Eisenstein writes that El Greco by way of collision begets what he desires to see in certain points during his promenade, which is also a fantastic path and a physically impossible journey in Toledo: „Le Greco le donne par collision de ce qu'il désire voir en certains points de ce parcours qui est aussi une course fantastique et physiquement inconcevable à travers Tolède et ses environs¹⁵⁰." This "course fantastique" is a cinematic promenade and not an architectural one.

- The fragmentation of the city which lacks unity in *Views* makes it illustrative in function, remaining at the level of literal visual reproduction of Toledo. It resembles Repin's aborted depiction of Tolstoy in which, in order to visualize the author's inner illumination, he painted a light shining on his forehead and echoes *Expulsion* telling the tale of Jesus's fury at the temple.

149 Troutman, *El Greco*, 36.

150 Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 77.

Contrarily, *Storm*, with Toledo constituting only a little portion of the canvas in the middle, does not document the city but manages to convey its turbulent inner life. By not being invested in the surface appearance of the place, it overtakes the narrative function of its predecessor to reach a metaphorical level rendering an image of an inner turmoil in the shape of a storm, and is thus more aligned to Serov's Yermolova.

Although it is the specific argument pertaining to the function of the image in *Storm* that motivates Eisenstein's opposition to Willumsen's topographic reading of the two Toledos and causes a rift between the two writers, I posit that the change in format and the representation itself are also major contributing factors which Eisenstein did not mention.

My conclusion is that *Storm* is twice cinematic because, like Yermolova, it allows the viewer to inhabit contradictory points of views which cannot be occupied in real life simultaneously, and also because it has reached a degree of subjectivity that goes beyond the limitations of its medium and genre.

III- GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI

Sergei Eisenstein's undated article (supposedly from 1947) on Giovanni Battista Piranesi titled *Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Forms* is thirty pages long and without subdivisions, footnotes or clear progression of ideas¹⁵¹. Out of the multitude of rich concepts present in this text, and the jumps from Strauss, to Goethe, to Mexican temples and Chinese philosophy, I unearth Eisenstein's argument that Piranesi used cinematic montage in the second edition of his *Carceri Oscure* series in order to bring the viewer of these artworks to a state of ecstasy. Eisenstein discovered Piranesi through his friend Sergei Ivanovich Zimin (1874- 1942)¹⁵² who traveled in 1904 to Europe, including to Rome, in order to study theater and opera direction¹⁵³. Zimin brought with him Giulio Ferrari¹⁵⁴'s book *La Scenografia*, containing the reproductions of Piranesi's etchings, which Eisenstein read by his own account¹⁵⁵.

151 Eisenstein makes no mention of Piranesi in his *Notes for a General History of Cinema*.

152 Sergei Ivanovich Zimin (1874-1942) was a Russian opera manager who founded the Zimin opera company in 1903, working with artists such as Ivan Biblin, Viktor Vasnetsov and Nicholas Roerich as costume and set designers. The company staged around 120 operas and closed in 1917, after which Zimin worked for the Bolshoi Theater until his death.

153 "Sergei Ivanovich Zimin", *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 3rd Edition (1970-1979), accessed February 13th 2017, <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Sergei+Ivanovich+Zimin>

154 See chapter on Giulio Ferrari in the art historians section

155 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", *Oppositions* 11,(1978), 85. (I am relying on this specific edition of Eisenstein's

Unlike Serov and El Greco's work which Eisenstein only saw at exhibitions, he acquired Piranesi's prints¹⁵⁶ for his personal collection by barter from a provincial museum¹⁵⁷. Indeed, in 1768, Empress Catherine the Great in Russia obtained *Grotteschi*, *Carceri*, along with another series entitled *Prima Parte*, all from Piranesi's 1750 album *Opere Varie*. These works, which were initially part of the collection of Count Heinrich von Brühl (1700-1763)¹⁵⁸, and she made them into the core of the graphic arts collection of the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, which explains their presence in the Soviet Union and in Eisenstein's surroundings.

Given the chaotic nature of Eisenstein's writings, I present his text and restructure it around central themes underlying its arguments, which answer the question: If it is not strictly architecture that makes *Carceri* cinematic, then what does?

9. *Carcere with Staircase*

Eisenstein's article opens up with him looking far out from his window unto the edges of Moscow and unto a field where he once filmed the Battle on Ice of his movie *Alexander Nevsky* (1938). With his thoughts on his movie, his vision almost "zooms" into his own room "between the windows-in the corner- a windowsill"¹⁵⁹ where Piranesi's etching is hung.

article because it includes his sketches).

156 See chapter on Ferrari

157 Which museum exactly remains unknown.

158 Heinrich von Brühl: was a Polish-Saxon statesman at the court of Saxony.

159 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 85.

Eisenstein's gaze itself operates like a film camera doing impossible feats of zooming in and out of pictures to promote his analysis. As analytical method, he favors the juxtaposition of two works of two different stages of the creativity of the same artist. He at first chooses an etching titled *Carcere Oscuro* ("the dark prison") (ill.5) which he dates at ca. 1745 and states that it belongs to the series *Opere Varie di Architettura prospettive grotteschi antichità sul gusto degli antichi romani*¹⁶⁰. He sees it as "unecstatic" and attempts to change his feeling: "while looking at the etching and mentally analyzing the methods of producing

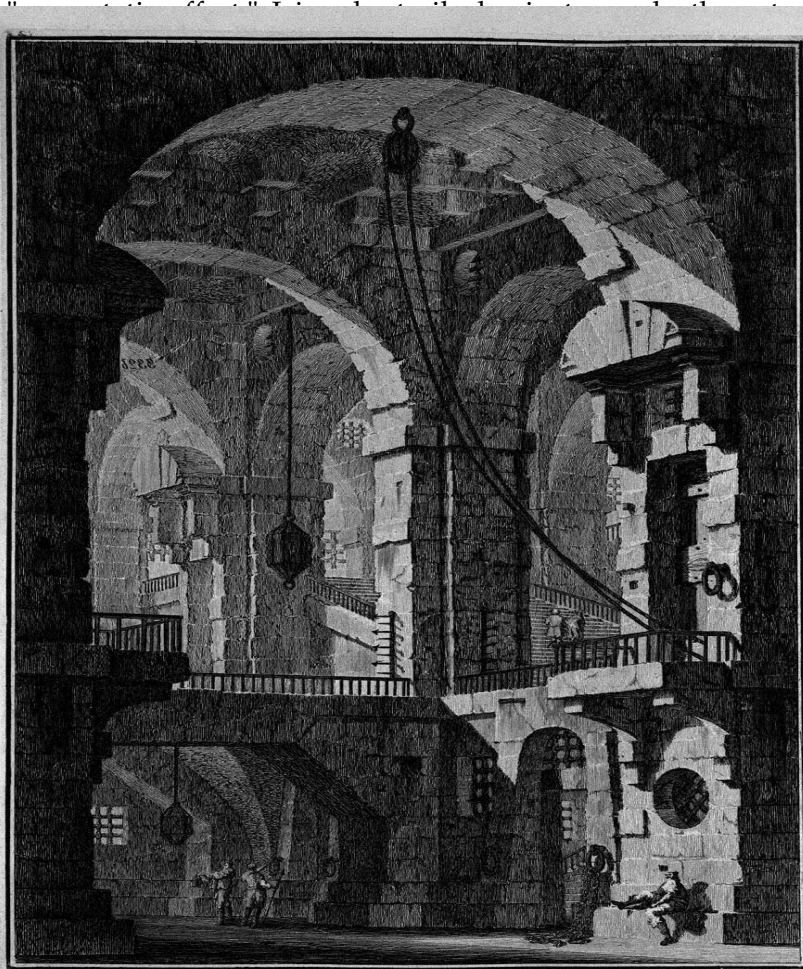


Fig. 5. "Carcere Oscuro" (The Dark Prison). Etching by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1745. The image shows a complex, multi-level underground structure with arches, stairs, and a large central dome. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from small windows and openings. Several figures are visible on different levels, including one on a balcony and others in the lower areas. The architecture is described as "grotteschi antichità" (grotesque antiquities) in the caption.

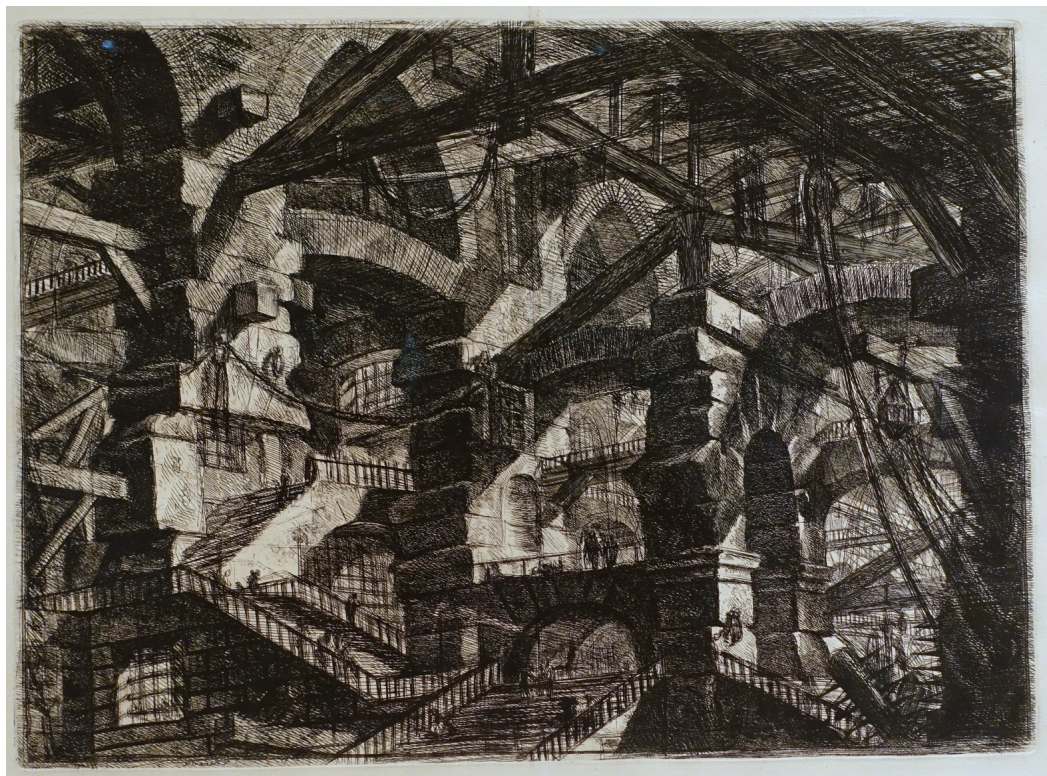
Ill.8: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *The Dark Prison*, etching from “Opere Varie”, ca. 1750.

Eisenstein then wonders what would happen if *The Dark Prison* is brought to ecstasy as a whole, with all its elements, through a series of 10 explosions¹⁶². He then draws a scheme, a sort of blueprint, of the etching, allocating to each architectural element within it a letter. He then sketches each element separately and makes it explode. Once Eisenstein is done with his mental explosion, he states that his mind roams in the room where the etching hangs and finds another etching of Piranesi hung on the wall. He concludes that *The Dark Prison*¹⁶³ becomes *Carcere with Staircase* (ill.9)¹⁶⁴.

162 Ibid., 86.

163The “Dark Prison” *Carcere Oscuro* which Eisenstein mentions to be part of *Opere Varie* dates back from 1750 and not from 1745. This date is visible on the book’s frontispiece which reads “In Roma, MDCCL”, meaning “in Rome, 1750”. It is printed in red and black with copper engraved vignette, which Eisenstein calls “expressive burnt sienna colored coffee stains.” See: Sergei Eisenstein, “Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms”, 85.

164The second etching which Eisenstein refers to is *Carcere with Staircase*, which comes in two variations, both of which are reproduced in the translation of the article published in the journal *Oppositions*: “Carcere with staircase ascending the stairs” aka the Gothic Arch, XIV, from the first state, dated ca.1745. And the same Carcere from the second edition, dated ca.1760.” It is not clear to me at all into what etching is “The Dark Prison” transformed exactly. Eisenstein’s statement about the artwork from *Opere Varie* “namely it lies at the basis of Piranesi’s second etching”, does not specify its referent. Does he mean that the Dark Prison becomes the Carcere with staircase from 1745 or Carcere with staircase from 1760? Furthermore, “they would both hang on the yellow wall of my room” remains unclear: Who are “both”? The Dark Prison and the Carcere with Staircase? If so, which Carcere exactly, the one from the first edition or from the second edition? In case he hypothesizes that The Dark Prison becomes Carcere with staircase from 1745, then the artwork in a way regressed into an early ecstatic state with a lapse of five years between each etching. In case he hypothesizes that The Dark Prison becomes Carcere with



Ill.9: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Le Carceri d'Invenzione aka Carcere with Staircase, Etching, Second Edition, ca. 1761, Museum Berggruen (part of Eisenstein's collection).

Eisenstein's comparative method allowing him to juxtapose two artworks far away in time from one another in the oeuvre of Piranesi likewise marked his study of El Greco. Whether looking into *Expulsion* in tandem with *Resurrection*, *View and Plan of Toledo* alongside *Storm over Toledo*, *The Dark Prison* and *Carcere with Staircase*, Eisenstein uses montage as an analytical tool to confront different artworks and his choice of these specific etchings by Piranesi deserves a closer inspection. I examine the

first aspect which drew him to *Carceri*; their “independent value”.

9.1. *Independent value*

Eisenstein examines the first turning point the *Carceri* series constitute in relation to Piranesi’s other works, writing that: “But what is particularly striking is its total correspondence with what happened to Piranesi between the series *Vedute Varie* and the *Carceri*. Actually the *Carceri* stand almost at the beginning of Piranesi’s creative path. Everything that had been done until then has almost no real *independent value*. (With the exception of two or three of the *Caprice*.) And even those different groups of etchings which were created by Piranesi before *The Prisons* did not compose *independent* series; but later the majority of them became part of the series of architectural panoramas of 1750.”¹⁶⁵ In this paragraph, Eisenstein emphasizes a certain independent value which the *Carceri* possess that is lacking from most of Piranesi’s other works which lead to the emergence of Piranesi’s creative path. My question is: What are these etchings independent of and how does this independence come into play with cinema?

Tarabukin articulates a similar view to Eisenstein’s when writing about the new independent value of reproductive technologies. In his article “The Art of the Day: What one needs to know in order to make posters, woodcuts, advertisements, produce books, newspapers, and placards, and what possibilities are opened up by photo-mechanics”, he studies earlier reproductive technologies and highlights two

165 Sergei Eisenstein, “Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms”, 92 (my emphasis).

significant turning points throughout history brought upon by the advent of photography¹⁶⁶, which resonate with Eisenstein's article. Tarabukin finds that lithographs, engravings and etchings had been closely linked to the art of the book which they had exclusively served to reproduce or to illuminate: "The connection between engraving and the book did not help the independent development of engraving as an art form¹⁶⁷." But according to him, photography as a fully-mechanized reproductive process liberated these older technologies from their previous mandate, because when compared to their mechanic counterpart, they fall short from satisfying the need for exact copies. Consequently, once freed from their imposed reproductive task, lithographs, engravings and etchings became a form "easel art": "Engraving was only transformed from a tool of reproduction into a form of "pure" art when its techniques could no longer satisfy the demands that time presented to the craft of reproduction¹⁶⁸."

Art historically, Carceri as well as their predecessors in *Prima Parte* stand out from Piranesi's previous works: He created around 2000 etchings of both Rome and Venice, called Vedute Varie (urban views), transposed his drawings unto a copperplate, then reproduced them in order to preserve the memory of these places which he sold to tourists¹⁶⁹. This earlier artistic engagement with an existing city soon paved the way for the creation of imaginary spaces¹⁷⁰, including the

166 He predates Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* who wrote in 1935: "Graphic art was first made technologically reproducible by the woodcut, long before written language became reproducible by movable type." Benjamin, p.20.

167 Tarabukin, "The Art of the Day", 60.

168 Ibid., 61.

169 John Howe, preface to *Giovanni Battista Piranesi, The Prisons/Le Carceri*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2010), 8.

170 Heather Hyde Minor, *Piranesi's Lost Words*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 7.

series titled *Grotteschi* (begun in 1743, printed in 1747-49) and then the *Carceri* (begun in 1745, printed in 1749-50)¹⁷¹ and *Prima Parte* which Eisenstein selects. *Prima Parte* are made of a title page and thirteen plates of what is presumed to be prison-like structures, also called *Carceri*. These *Carceri* are not the representation of a building that exists in real life¹⁷² nor are they preparatory drawings for a building to come, and are therefore a poor argument for a thesis strictly on cinematic architecture. Consequently, the task of engendering *Carceri* is utterly divorced from any reproductive function as it is not reproducing, illustrating or narrating anything¹⁷³. They relate to architecture only in so far as they depict perspectives, views, and architecture elements such as arches and columns, not out of a practical concern, but in order to express something else, an inner state of being, which Piranesi left no trace of in his writings¹⁷⁴.

Read in this light, I find that it is thanks to photography's advanced mimetic capability that technologies preceding it such as lithography, engravings, and etchings opened up their field of application from exclusive reproduction which obliterates the creative possibilities of the

171 Kerriane Stone and Gerard Vaughan, *The Piranesi Effect*, 112

172 Kerriane Stone and Gerard Vaughan, *The Piranesi Effect*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press), 117.

173 And while viewers may or may not be able to deduce that *Carceri* are impossible to be realized just by looking at them, it was only in 1950 that Ulya Vogt-Göknil's analysis actually proved this impossibility: "The perspectives are ambiguous, consisting of views constructed from multiple plans that overlap and contradict one another". See: Lars Spuybroek: *The Acrobatics of the Figure*, p.10-11.

174 Terry Kirk, *The Architecture of Modern Italy, Volume 1: The Challenge of Tradition 1750-1900*, (New York, Princeton Architectural Press: 2005), 48

medium to the creation of an artwork. Piranesi is relevant for Eisenstein's cinematic art history because, even before the advent of photography, he freed his etchings from the burden of mimesis, experimented with them, and expanded their possibilities by rejecting the representation of a recognizable space. The independent value which Eisenstein rightfully sees in *Carceri* is their liberation from the imposition of reproduction.

Moreover, I see in Eisenstein's mention of *Carceri*'s independent value a deep resemblance to El Greco's "high level of subjectivity" present in *Storm over Toledo*. Same as the Cretan painter freed *Storm* from the task of illustrating and narrating the city; an approach which characterized his *View and Plan of Toledo*, Piranesi likewise released his etchings from their reliance on buildings to come or on existing cities; an approach which characterized his *Vedute* of Rome and Venice. Consequently, the fact that both *Carceri* and *Storm* stand out from their artists' illustrative and mimetic endeavors respectively, they facilitate El Greco and Piranesi's subjective expression which reached its paroxysm with the unity of man and nature in *Storm*. The painter and the etcher stand in the center of their work.

This liberation in turn impacts their intermedial status and positions them at the juncture of architecture and of Piranesi's own use of etching. *Carceri* creatively employ architectural elements and simultaneously subvert any practical function such a use may have because their medium, traditionally used to display architecture, is now considered in its own right as artistic. They reap the energy of both *what* they represent (ecstatic columns, arches, bridges etc.) and of *how* they represent it (unassociated to mimesis) same as *Yermolova* reaped the inner power of the actress on stage and on canvas and same as *Storm over Toledo* combines the pull that both man and nature can exert.

Same as this value and the subjectivity it incurs are accompanied by a biographical change in the case of El Greco,

it likewise refers to a transition in Piranesi's life which Eisenstein also explored.

9.2. *Biographical change*

Eisenstein's second argument answering the question what allows the expression of cinema specifically in the second Carcere, is the change in Piranesi's biography and his transition from "archaeologist to artist, from scholar to poet, from investigator to visionary"¹⁷⁵, helping him progress towards a new expression of a mysterious "inner spirituality"¹⁷⁶.

The time frame that Eisenstein has in mind is roughly between 1745 and 1760, between the realization of The Dark Prison and the 2nd Carcere with Staircase respectively and it stands out indeed from the rest of Piranesi's biography.

Eisenstein scans the artist's life with a specific moment in mind; the moment in which his etchings were freed of reproductive function and could convey his inner life, causing: "One of those psychic leaps which "suddenly" "instantly," unexpected and unforeseen, raises man above his equals to the heights of a true creator capable of extracting

175 Eisenstein, "El Greco", 122. (Eisenstein's text on El Greco in *Non-Indifferent Nature* contains a paragraph extending itself to its text on Piranesi, which is omitted from other reproductions of the El Greco text as well as from the Piranesi article).

176 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 92.

Eisenstein does not develop this concept any further nor does he mention it again.

from his soul images of unprecedented power, which with unremitting strength burn the hearts of men.”¹⁷⁷

Similarly, Tarabukin asserts that the main consequence of technologies such as etchings being freed of their reproductive functions, as the reshaping of the function of the person creating the image: “The technology of wood engraving surpassed itself, resulting in a certain hypertrophy of its technical devices (...) But with copperplate, the same goal of reproducing the “tones” of the engraving was reached with less effort, and with less violence to the material. This sort of process led to the degeneration of form and of carved engraving and anticipated the technique of etching. The engraving tool was replaced by a puncheon. Carved engravings were refined to the point of dotted lines being possible. Finally, etching technology freed the engraver from his dependence on the material. The physical labor of the engraver was replaced by the chemical process of etching. A needle replaced the cutting tool. Varnished primer replaced the metal plate.”¹⁷⁸

Art historically, Piranesi was born in Venice in 1720 into a family of stone carvers, he was also draftsman, printmaker, sculptor, architect, art dealer, author, and archaeologist¹⁷⁹. From 1743 until 1747, he lived in Venice where he experimented with the Vedute¹⁸⁰ and studied under Tiepolo but moved permanently to the Eternal City in 1747. While Piranesi maintained that he was not an orthodox architect seeking clients and adjusting his drawings to their needs, he theorized about architecture in *Della Magnificenza ed architettura de’ Romani* (1761) and *Parere sull’ architettura* (1765). He nonetheless completed the restoration of one building in Rome; the church of Santa Maria del Priorato (1764), as well as signed all his copperplates with the title

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid., 62

179 Heather Hyde Minor, *Piranesi’s Lost Words*, 1.

180 Terry Kirk, *The Architecture of Modern Italy, Volume 1*, 48.

“Piranesi architetto veneziano”. It is also when he started his *Carceri* in 1745.

I find that same as El Greco’s cinematic *Storm* is part of a very creative and intense time frame in his life, when he moved to Toledo and when his workshop there received numerous commissions which he used to reconsider his artistic practice and to innovate, Piranesi likewise moved to Rome and started producing his independent etchings. It is the moment of Piranesi becoming an artist that Eisenstein looks for and finds in his biography, enabled by his liberation of etching from the reproduction which characterized his Vedute, turning this medium into an art form.

Moreover, the relation of both El Greco and Piranesi to the 20th century is essential to their link to cinema: Both of them are aligned to the 20th century’s way of seeing and of being while having lived in another time altogether. Same as El Greco used a 28 mm camera lens to represent the world in the fashion of the spherical aberration proper to the newly-emerging photography in the USSR, Piranesi’s gesture of freeing himself from the fetters of his medium makes him part of Eisenstein’s time. Piranesi accomplishes what artists of the 20th century endeavored to do and what Tarabukin incites them to do, but he achieved this biographical precociously, thereby changing his status from a copier of his surroundings to an artist capable of transmitting another view of the world

9.3. Accumulation of perspective

The third argument which Eisenstein relies on when stating that Piranesi’s Carcere is traversed by cinema is the artist’s creative use of repetition to generate conflict. Eisenstein points out that Carcere relies on an optical

contradiction: "The accumulation of perspective moves into the distance, borders on the madness of narcotic visions (...), but each link of these totally dizzy perspectives is "in itself" quite naturalistic."¹⁸¹

When surveying both the role of repetition and the use of perspective in the etchings, he writes that: "the actual composition of architectural ensembles is constructed on the basis of the uninterrupted reduction of repetitions of one and the same architectural motif, *repetitions which seem to hurl out of each other (by perspective)*. Like the tubes of a single telescope extending in length and diminishing in diameter, these diminishing arches engendered by the arches of a plane closer up, these flights of stairs ejecting progressively diminishing new flights of stairs upward, penetrate into the depths. Bridges engender new bridges. Columns new columns. And so on, ad infinitum. As far as the eye can follow. (...) Plane bursts from plane and by a system of explosions plunges ever deeper into the depths. Or through a system of new foregrounds continuously arising which by their displacement plunge forward from the etching, *attacking the viewer*. Forward or into the depths?-Here is it not the same? And in this simultaneity of opposite aspirations-forward and into the depths-once again there is solemnly removed in ecstasy *one more pair-a pair of opposites!*"¹⁸²

In this paragraph, I find another similarity to Eisenstein's analysis of El Greco which relied on the mechanical reproduction of the unecstatic *Expulsion* series as well as on the copying of the same figures in several paintings with complete disregard to the canvas. Nevertheless, repetition alone of artworks does not guarantee a cinematic quality which depends more on the manner in which it is executed.

181 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 94.

182 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 104-105 (my emphasis)

Piranesi inversely repeats his perspectives in order to create conflicting representations emerging *out* of each other in the *same* picture, and not representations identical *to* each other the way El Greco did with *Expulsion*. For this reason, his reconception of his artwork defers from that of his counterpart and manages to instigate a qualitative leap in the functioning of the image by raising its intensity to the point of ecstasy, whereas El Greco's reproductions remain "boring".

Eisenstein further outlines the function of the repetition of perspective: "The first is a direct effect expressed in the fact that such reduced representation through the breach of an arch or from under a bridge, or between two columns, creates the illusion that what is represented in the depths is *extremely remote*. But the other effect is even stronger. We have already said that the scale of these new pieces of architectural space turns out to be different from the way the eye "expects" to see them. In other words: the dimensions and movement of architectural elements that are directed, let us say, toward meeting an arch naturally define the scale of elements behind the arch while proceeding from the scale of elements in front of the arch. (...) Instead through this arch another architectural motif meets the eye, and moreover-a motif taken in reduced perspective, approximately *twice as large* as the eye would suggest. And as a result one feels as if the suggested arched construction "is exploding" out of its naturally suggested scale into a qualitatively different scale-into a scale of higher intensity (in the given case, the normally proposed movement into space is exploding "out of itself "). This is the source of the unexpected qualitative leap in scale and space."¹⁸³

183 Ibid.,105 (my emphasis)

My interpretation here is that Piranesi's repetition of perspective is cinematic because it deploys two antagonistic effects:

Firstly, it operates as an illusory-spatial technique preserving the unity of the space. Although it is unbuildable, *Carcere with Staircase's* use of perspective retains a sense of concreteness that leads its viewer to suppose that the elements, as parts isolated inside of the picture, work logically; that stairs will lead somewhere, that bridges connect two spaces, that arches hold up a structure, and that the whole is "quite naturalistic".

Secondly, with the same gesture of preserving the space, the repeated perspective creates interruptions in the entire composition, and in the manner in which it is seen because when the viewer perceives these parts in their relation to the whole, they realize that the composition is in fact illogical. Its repetition of perspective operates as a device to promote its illogic.

For this reason, this cinematic repetition of perspective does the thing and its opposite; maintaining and shattering the space. It operates in the fashion as montage.

Furthermore, when describing the movement animating the artwork resulting from this use of perspective, Eisenstein writes: "In exactly the same way, the system of arches D, while increasing its tendency to *plunge into the depths* in the course of having changed the angular contour into a semi-circular one breaks with its thrust through this enclosing wall with the barred window and whirls off somewhere in the direction of a general point of descent (...). In contrast to the way it appeared in the initial etching, turns out to be somewhere not between the upper and lower edge of the etching, but *beyond its limits* not only on the right, but also *downward*. (...) The broken balconies m1 and m2 on the foreground columns a 1 and a2 throw themselves toward each other, become a single bridge, and this bridge remains not

as balconies in front of the arch encircling D, but undoubtedly rushes *beyond it-into the depths and perhaps upward.*"¹⁸⁴

Onwards, Eisenstein highlight that montage mediates between the collision of perspective, which our eye retains thanks to the persistence of its vision: "And the series of spatial movements into the depths cut off from each other by columns and arches is constructed like a succession of broken links of independent spaces strung out not in terms of a single, uninterrupted perspective, but as a *sequence of collisions of spaces* whose depth is of a qualitatively different intensity. (This effect is constructed on the capacity of our eye to continue by inertia a movement once it has been given. The collision of this "suggested" path of movement with another path substituted for it also produces the effect of a jolt. It is on the analogous ability of retaining imprints of a visual impression that the phenomenon of cinematic movement is built.)"¹⁸⁵

Read in the light of the Eisenstein's views on El Greco, I predicate that the first edition of *Carcere* contains the seed of ecstasy that only fully-blossomed in the later version thanks to the exercise of repetition, same as *Expulsion* had enough Pathos in it to allow for *Resurrection* to fully live-out its ecstatic dimension. Eisenstein highlights this elsewhere in the text: "If at the initial source of this image there would have been no ecstatic state, then the image which had not been engendered by such a state would not be in a condition to function as a "prescription" which would induce the reader experiencing it to fall into a state of ecstasy by repeating it."¹⁸⁶

184 Ibid., 89.

185 Ibid., 106.

186 Ibid., 99

The conflict-ridden repetition of perspective allows each depicted architectural element to relentlessly clone another version of itself which decreases in size. This cloning conveys a sense of prolongation towards infinity and in different directions, depending on the position of the arch, or bridge, or column which do not stop reproducing themselves when they reach the frame of the etching. With their agitated movement, they also agitate the eye of the viewer who is attacked and hurled, simultaneously, in two opposite directions: Both into the depth, as in from the viewer and into the image so as to determine the source and perceive the start of this endless stream of stairs etc. And out of the depth, as in from the image and towards the viewer, to determine the end of the same endless stream of stairs etc.

But on this two-way street, the eye is constantly interrupted in its promenade, facing again and again other elements in its way: The bridge blocking the stairs, the arch against the wall, the column against a frame etc. It thus experiences the contradictory situation of simultaneously being hurled towards an object, and of being intruded upon by other objects, and also of seeing an object as both extremely remote *and* extremely close similar to El Greco's use of a 28 mm camera lens to combine in a single image a space that is both near and far.

Piranesi's use of repetition as montage of these contradictory elements which we behold as infinitely unfolding in time and thrusting themselves at us, guides our eye to where the image wants to take us: Towards more illogical constructions out of the limits of the etching, in order to experience the sense of a "whirlwind", a "hurricane" slipping "beyond the limits of the margins of the first sheet"¹⁸⁷, and towards a hurricane that twirls from top to bottom, bottom to top, forward and backwards, ever circular, whose inner core is unseen and in which, "some planes, opening up to infinity behind each other, *carry the eye into*

unknown depths, and the staircases, ledge by ledge, extend to the heavens, or in a reverse cascade of these same ledges, rush downward”¹⁸⁸.

10. *Art History Looks at The Dark Prison and The Carcere*

In his text, Eisenstein sketches each element in *The Dark Prison* separately, uses moontage to alter it by making it more “ecstatic” and then integrates everything back. I point out that the director uses here exactly the same method as with El Greco’s *Expulsion* and *Resurrection*. But this time the artworks deal with the same theme, prisons, and hence their ecstatization does not take place on the level of *what* is being depicted (how the theme changed into another theme), but rather *how* it is being depicted (what is the difference between both etchings?). Eisenstein reaches the same conclusion as with El Greco: Since he managed to ecstatize the artwork, he predicates that the artist in question must have done the same.

Much to his surprise, it turns out that both he and Piranesi used the same method of internal explosions of the forms of *The Dark Prison* to create both *Carceri*: “Compare Piranesi’s amazing architectural visions which float into each other not only in terms of the uniqueness of their structure, but even their figurative system to the concrete forms of the fantastic architecture of the ecstatic states of the author.”¹⁸⁹

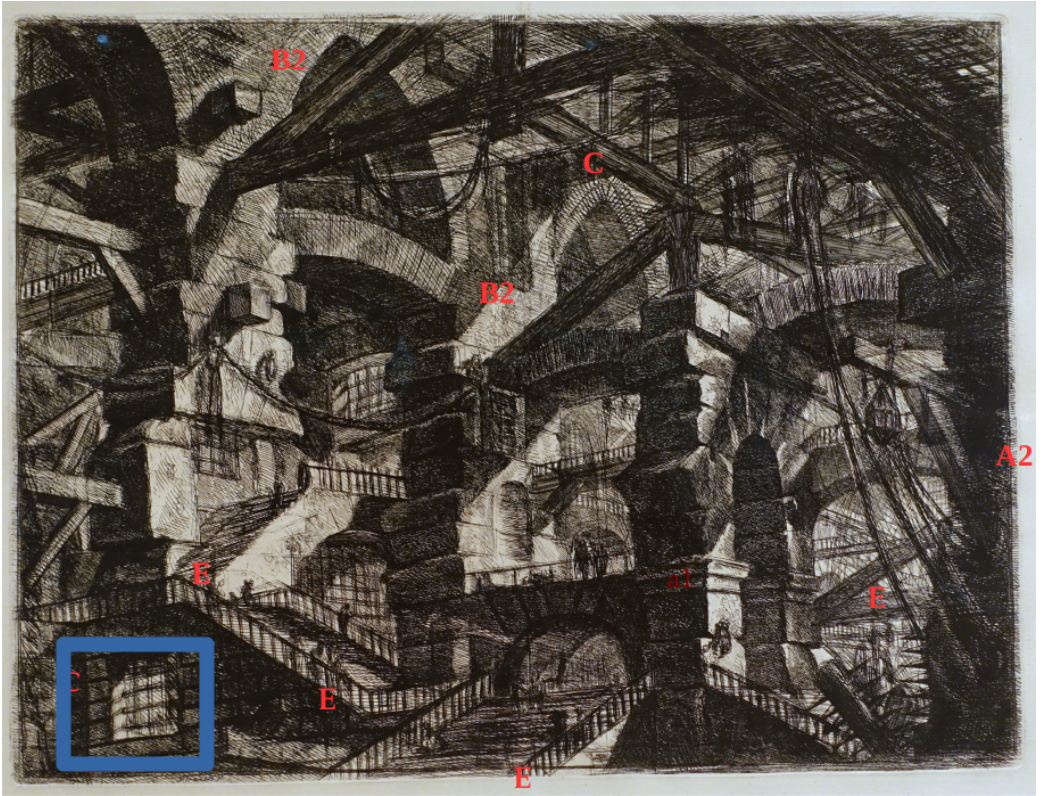
Read in the light of Eisenstein’s previous texts, his choice of cinematic etching seemed to me somewhat strange, since it contradicts, for once, his favoring of the vertical

188 Ibid., 91. (my emphasis)

189 Sergei Eisenstein, “Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms”, 100

format, as opposed to the passive horizontal one. So how could it be that he chose *Carcere with Staircase* over *The Dark Prison*? I turn to my own art historical method and to Janus' other face to find out why.

When putting Eisenstein's theory to the test and attempting to repeat his montage in Piranesi, sketching the elements anew has not helped me prove anything. Therefore, I analyze each statement Eisenstein uttered in regards to the transformation and comment on it, while maintaining the annotations he gave to each of the architectural elements in *The Dark Prison*, and while, whenever possible, searching for them in *Carcere with Staircase* (III.7):



Ill.10: My interpretation of Carcere with Staircase.

- The Arch: "In the first place, of course, the arch A, enclosing the engraving, explodes. Its upper semicircle of stone flies out beyond the borders of the etching. If you like-from a semicircle it becomes . . . polygonal. From stone-to wood (...)The space of the etching included between the columns a1 and a2 "is hurled" beyond these limits. Columns a1 and a2, abandoning their framing role, "exploding" inside the etching, and the etching, after expanding beyond their limits, "leaps" out of the vertical format into the horizontal."¹⁹⁰

Eisenstein sees here that the arch A and the columns a1 and a2, framing Dark Prison, have exploded and no longer exists in *Carcere with Staircase*. I interpret this absence as a change in the function of the arch: It no longer frontally paves the way for a view of the space inside of *Dark Prison* theatrically, but becomes part of a larger and more complex compositional ensemble in *Carcere*. The top of the arch indeed does not exist in the second artwork and this may have further asserted Eisenstein's explosion theory. As for the change from stone to wood, Eisenstein is actually referring to the change in colors; from the cold white of *Dark Prison* to the copper-color of *Carcere*.

- "The arches B and B 1 are also not lacking in this tendency to explode. From the arches A and C which flew completely into bits, these arches can undergo an "explosion" within their own form; that is, having retained the "idea" of an arch, they can be modified into something opposite in character. Under these conditions what will such a qualitative leap within the form of the arch be like?A leap from a semicircular arch-into an arrow-shaped arch."¹⁹¹

I indeed see a transformation in the arch which becomes in *Carcere* arrow-shaped and aligned to the Gothic tradition, but its explosion reproduces it in the picture several times, as my own annotations prove.

190 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 88.

191 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 88-89

- "Rushing down forward and moving off into the depths from column at on downward, the staircase, in its increasing explosion, displaces column at standing in its path, hurls forward, but now no longer by only the one flight of stairs E, but like a stroke of lightning in zigzag fashion-E, E1,E2 hurls forward to the maximum possible extent. And this maximum extent turns out to be a thrust *beyond the limits of the contours of the etching*. In exactly the same way, the system of arches D, while increasing its tendency to plunge into the depths, in the course of having changed the angular contour into a semicircular one breaks with its thrust through this enclosing wall with the barred window and whirls off *somewhere in the direction of a general point of descent*, which in turn, in contrast to the way it appeared in the initial etching, turns out to be somewhere not between the upper and lower edge of the etching, but *beyond its limits* not only on the right, but also downward; and following this example, the solid foundation of the floor (so clearly visible in the first state and which in the second disappears *somewhere in the depths outside the frame* in its new ecstatic form) vanishes with a roar."¹⁹²

I find that what Eisenstein is invested in here is not only the transformation of architectural elements such as the stairs and the columns and into different versions of themselves in *Carcere*, but the way in which they hint (through their new disposition) at a place outside of the etching. Because the floor is not visible in the picture, the zigzagging stairs E, once they hit the bottom edge of the etching, give the impression of not reaching their end. Their intersection with the frame can still mark an endless repetition of the motif. Similarly, when looking at the top left corner of the etching where half of an arch is etched, the end of this arch is also not visible. Its meeting point with the frame of the picture, in no

192 Ibid., 89. (my emphasis)

way signals the end of the motif. This arch, along with the series of arches behind it, can also burst outside of the frame infinitely.

Same as Yermolova is imbued with a sense of motion thanks to the location of her vanishing point outside of the frame (a peculiarity which Eisenstein does not mention as such), and same as in El Greco's *Resurrection*, the man on the right hand side of the viewer is brought into such ecstasy that he is about to exit the pictorial space, Piranesi's ecstatic elements do the same: They go beyond their frame in order to reach a mysterious depth that the picture alone cannot contain.

- "The round window c is transformed: into a square and turns into a flat plane perpendicular to it. And finally, breaking loose from the central line (which is drawn so distinctly), the ropes and blocks explode into those parts of the etching that were not even in the first, vertical, state of the plate !¹⁹³"

Here I concur that the round window becomes a square one in *Carcere* opting for a more cinematic and dynamic format, agitating the viewer's eye even more. The ropes which were previously contained by *Dark Prison* are visible in several spots in the second composition, bring movement into the previously poised and symmetrical composition.

Therefore, I find that what leads Eisenstein to exceptionally concede to the horizontal format of *Carcere* is the ability of the representation to go beyond the frame allocated to it. With architectural elements reaching out beyond its contours, almost infinitely, to the space outside of where they are etched, *Carcere* opens up an entire dimension of movement with its source outside of the artwork itself.

Rückblick: Eisenstein's art historical references

In the first part of my dissertation, I critically analyzed Eisenstein's texts on the three visual artists he considered: Valentin Serov, El Greco, and Giovanni Battista Piranesi, through the lens of his own film theory with its cinematic compositional factors and expressive traits such as movement, frame format, and montage. Keeping up with the image of Janus referring to the dual analytical model which

guides my work, my first exegesis constitutes its first and cinematic face.

Furthermore, I have taken my interpretation of the material a step further by proposing an alternative response to this reading of cinematic artworks, one which is lodged in art history and which is anchored in its comparative methods.

My elaboration of an art historical grounding to Eisenstein's ideas sheds light on the compositional properties within the cinematic paintings and etchings that have facilitated or contradicted Eisenstein's views by answering the questions: Which paintings did Eisenstein consider as cinematic? And what compositional factors in them are in fact cinematic?

The confrontation between these two different gazes upon the same artwork allows me to look forward towards cinema and to look back towards art history in order to initiate a dialogue enabling me to reach the core of Eisenstein's views on the visual arts.

In *Theory as Quotation*, Mikhail Iampolsky outlines the difficulties and contradictions inherent to Eisenstein's theoretical works. Not only are his writings incomplete and numerous, but most of their translations and publications have focused on texts which can be integrated into a more coherent critical apparatus or school, and are only the tip of the iceberg. Also, Eisenstein's influences and inspiration sources are very eclectic and well-reflected in his articles to the point of making him combine opposing tendencies; being a mystic, a scientist, a montage-theorist, a constructivist etc. all at the same time.

In order to bring these differences together and to alleviate his own eclecticism, Eisenstein uses a general "context" or theoretical framework, and in the late 20s and 30s, this context was montage, also operating in the very text. Eisenstein uses theories as a source of quotations, which he extracts from their whole, decontextualizes, and reconsiders as a fragmentary part.

This reduction makes researching Eisenstein difficult

although there is a transcendental state in which he unifies truths and theories, a point beyond antagonisms which Iampolsky calls "a certain kind of intellectual totalitarian utopia"¹⁹⁴, in which these fragments long for their integration in a semantic whole. Nevertheless, when approaching Eisenstein's numerous references, this utopia seems out of reach and the texts seem hyper-referential to the point of being unable to justly reclaim their sources.

With this in mind, it may appear counter-intuitive to approach the idea of "sources" and "influences" in relation to Eisenstein, and while I do agree with Iampolsky's views, I nevertheless contend that Eisenstein's knowledge was not *only* intertextual and that at times he did engage deeper than usual with specific writers and art historians to the point of making such an exchange between them worthy of consideration. I also predicate that seeing Eisenstein's quotes merely as such and his manner of writing as only encyclopedic risks obliterating, in the case of the texts I am analyzing, the circulation of ideas between him and Western art historians that would otherwise enrich both of their reception.

In this part of my dissertation, I take the exchange between the two gazes to another higher level by re-affirming my Janus once more but differently, by letting the communication between film theory and art history pave the way for a dialog between individuals: On one hand Eisenstein, and on the other hand, the art historians he cites asking: Which art historians did Eisenstein rely on and what use did he make of them?

In the texts that I analyzed on Serov, El Greco, and Piranesi, Eisenstein's theorists of choice rather fall outside of

194 Mikhail Iampolski, "Theory As Quotation," *October*. no. 88 (1999):

the domain of the cinema and into the field of art history, I analyze his writings anew in conjunction to theirs and confront them as equal interlocutors. My aim is to highlight the extent of his reliance on them and how he positions himself in relation to their work, by delimiting which ideas about art history were his and which were theirs, thus outlining his contribution and originality. Furthermore, I point out how his use of these historians impacts his overall approach to the visual arts and his argumentation about the presence of compositional factors that enable the working of cinema in a cinematic painting or etching, and how it changes his analytical method.

Before doing so, I start by motivating my choice of historians and clarify the scope of the method I employ in extracting them out of Eisenstein's hyper-quotational and chaotic texts. I choose to investigate only the art historians which Eisenstein cites or whose names he mentions more than once in different contexts or in relation to different ideas. I thereby exclude "casual" hints which are not wholly integrated into his writings, but seem to come out of the blue as a digression out of his active intellect.

To begin with, Yermolova is devoid of any references to art historians. Eisenstein had seen the artwork at the Tretyakov Gallery in 1935 and his starting point is the emotion that ran over him when beholding the artwork. His analysis of it deciphers the reason behind this feeling by using montage as an analytical tool to see the compositional factors in the artwork making it exert a strong power over its audience. Moreover, his first text "El Greco" mentions only British art historian Enriquetta Harris only once, whom he does not cite again¹⁹⁵. His second text "El Greco y el Cine" presents a radically different analytical style and is by far the article with the most references to art historians. It covers Julius Meier-Graefe (1867-1935); the author of *Spanische Reise*

195 Eisenstein, "El Greco", 113-114.

(1910), Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) who wrote *El Greco ou le secret de Tolède* (1912), the work of Maurice Legendre and Alfred Hartmann and the prologue of their book *Domenikos Theotokopoulos called El Greco* (1937) Frank Rutter's (1876-1937) *El Greco 1541-1614*. Like with Harris, Eisenstein also mentions these historians only once in a fashion that does not inform his overall theory about El Greco any further. Given the length of the article and its disorganization, my criterion of recurrence helps me concentrate on the historians who are constitutive of his arguments and impactful on his concepts: Hugo Kehrer's *Die Kunst des Grecos* (1914) published to commemorate the artist's death¹⁹⁶ as well as J.M Charcot and Paul Richer's *Les Démoniaques dans L'Art*.

Consequently, I find that Eisenstein's initial difference in dealing with secondary sources about the artworks he considers noteworthy because it implies differences in research methods. Eisenstein did not have a single approach to writers which he used top down to argue and theorize, but he rather opted for customized approaches to art historians to better suit his purposes.

11. Hugo Kehrer's *die Kunst des Grecos*

German art historian Hugo Ludwig Kehrer (born April 27, 1876 in Gießen, Germany- January 3, 1967 in Munich)¹⁹⁷ is

196 Adolfo de Mingo Lorente and Palma Martínez-Burgos García, *El Greco en el Cine. La Construcción de un Mito*, (Madrid: Ceyla, 2013), 282.

197 He is the son of the gynecologist Ferdinand Adolf Kehrer and the Emmy (1849-1924) born Frisch. After completing his high school diploma at the High School in Heidelberg, Kehrer first took up the officer's career and attended the military school of Gdansk.

present in Eisenstein's second article on El Greco through direct quotes from his *Die Kunst des Grecos*, and through indirect references, and brief mentions of his reproduction of paintings (therefore not of his theories but of the images in the appendix of his book) which Eisenstein relied on, knowing that the artworks were not in his proximity. According to Francois Albera's 8th footnote in his anthology¹⁹⁸, Eisenstein acquired Kehrers's book in 1937.

12. Intersections between Eisenstein and Kehrers

It is no wonder that Eisenstein would refer to Kehrers since he was one of the most important interpreters of Spanish painting and a connoisseur who enjoyed an international reputation thanks to the extensiveness of his work¹⁹⁹.

In 1900, Kehrers started studying art history, Protestant theology, and philosophy at the University of Heidelberg and passed his PhD defense in 1903. A year later, he passed the First Theological Examination in Karlsruhe, then continued his studies in Marburg with Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp in the same year. He traveled to Turkey, Asia, and Greece and between 1905 to 1908²⁰⁰, and later studied in Strasbourg with Georg Dehio²⁰¹,

After completion, he was employed as an officer in a Grenadier Regiment of Baden until 1901. In the year 1909, Kehrers became a member of the NSDAP in 1933 and he devoted his study of El Greco's mannerism, written in 1938, to "the glorious liberator of Spain", Generalísimo Francisco Franco.

¹⁹⁸Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 66.

¹⁹⁹ Friedrich Piel, „Kehrers, Hugo“, in: Neue Deutsche Biographie 11 (1977), last modified November 11, 2016, last accessed March 13, 2017, <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116093498.html>

Adolf Michaelis²⁰² and Johannes Ficker²⁰³. He received his habilitation in 1909 with the recommendation of Heinrich Wölfflin in Munich, writing "The Three Kings in Literature and Art" (2 volumes, 1908)²⁰⁴, which helped him join his capabilities as an art historian to his knowledge of religion. Significant for my work on El Greco is the year 1909 when Kehrre made the first of a total of thirteen travels to Spain in order to research its national art. According to the archival document²⁰⁵, from 1915 to 1945 he was an extraordinary professor for medieval and modern art history at the University of Munich, to which he returned after WWI, teaching Spanish art history as well as history and techniques of the graphic arts²⁰⁶.

200Hugo Kehrre, Internationales biographisches Archiv, 30/06, (Signature: Zsn 22543 / Lesesaal HB 2 Ga 2050).

201Georg Dehio (1850-1932) was a Baltic German art historian. In 1900, Dehio started the "Handbuch der deutschen Kunstgeschichte", and elaborated concepts in relation to the conservation and restoration of monuments.

202Adolf Michaelis (1835 – 1910) was a German classical scholar, a professor of art history at the University of Strasbourg from 1872, who helped establish the connoisseurship of Ancient Greek sculpture and Roman sculpture on their modern footing.

203Johannes Ficker (1861-1944) was a German evangelist theologian, Church historian and archaeologist.

204Piel "Kehrre, Hugo".

205Hugo Kehrre, Internationales biographisches Archiv, Zsn 22543, Lesesaal HB 2 Ga 2050.

206Notably absent from the document of the Internationales biographisches Archiv of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin which I relied on for Kehrre's biography are his ties to the Nazi party. Kehrre joined the Nazi party on May 1st 1933 and would teach a seminar in Munich titled "Jewish Influences" (Jüdischer Einfluß) three years later. In 1939, the Bavarian State's Ministry of Teaching and Education funded his book titled *Greco als Gestalt*

Kehrer writes in his preface to the first edition of *Die Kunst des Grecos*: "Like Murillo and Goya, El Gerco is the incarnation of Spanish-national sentiment. That is why he is particularly suited for revealing to us the soul of this people and the peculiarity of his art²⁰⁷." His signature bears the name "Dr. Hugo Kehrer (Privatdozent der Kunstgeschichte an der Universität München)". Moreover, in the preface to the third

des Manierismus which he dedicated "to General Francisco Franco, the great liberator of Spain", and a year later he became a public official earning 10 000 RM a year. The year 1943 marked the start of his work as a "Reichsvortragsredner des Volksbildungswerks" (Reich's Speaker for the Education of the People) and was sent by the Reich to lecture in art history in occupied territories such as the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Poland. t his de-Nazification trial in September 1946, the art historian claimed that it had become clear to him in the mid-thirties that Hitler's methods were not appropriate, but he remained a party member so as not to jeopardize his career as a scientist by getting fired from the university. He maintained that he only "served his science" (Ich habe nur meine Wissenschaft gedient). The judgment against him landed him in the third penal category of "Minderbelastet" (minor charges). which a year later, he pleaded against and finished in the fourth category of "Mitlaufer" (Nazi sympathizer). Kehrer's successful construction of the contradictory position of the politically-engaged party member who is still a 'neutral' scientist is representative of a national attitude towards Nazi art historians and became essential for the continuity of post-war art history without genuine de-Nazification. See: Christian Fuhrmeister, "Kontinuität und Blockade", in *Kunstgeschichte nach 1945. Kontinuität und Neubeginn in Deutschland*, ed. Nikola Doll, Ruth Heftrig, Olaf Peters, Ulrich Rehm, (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2006).

I have no reason to believe that Eisenstein knew about the art historian's political affiliations, especially because Kehrer never visited the USSR according to his biographical sources, nor did his book *Die Kunst des Grecos* contain any biography or mention of Nazism.

edition of the same book, Kehrer states that: "If any one felt and recognized the origin of all art anew in sensation/impression/feeling, it was El Greco. He shook the Renaissance with its one-sided formalism. The Renaissance no longer knew what the soul means, no longer knew the longing for the infinite, the metaphysical. (...) El Greco became Expressionist at the end of his life. In the revival of the soul lies his greatness²⁰⁸." Hence, throughout his study, the art historian links the Cretan painter to both the country in which he lived, considering him distinctly Spanish, as well as to the realm of metaphysics, in order to clarify his artistic practice, especially in Toledo.

Kehrer provides an outline of El Greco's biography ("Lebensgeschichte") who after having spent time in Italy working with Tintoretto²⁰⁹ and Barocci²¹⁰ among others,

207Hugo Kehrer, foreword to the first edition of *Die Kunst Des Grecos - Mit Einundsiebzig Tafeln* (Munich: Hugo Schmidt Verlag, 1914), 9. "Gerco ist wie Murillo und Goya die Verkörperung spanisch-nationalem Empfindes. Darum ist er besonders geeignet, uns die Seele dieses Volkes und das Eigenartige seiner Kunst zu erschliessen."

208Hugo Kehrer, foreword to the first edition of *Die Kunst Des Grecos - Mit Einundsiebzig Tafeln* (Munich: Hugo Schmidt Verlag, 1914), 10-11. "Wenn irgendeiner den Ursprung aller Kunst aufs neue in der Empfindung fühlte und erkannte, so ist es Greco gewesen. Er rüttelte am Quaderbau der Renaissance mit ihrem einseitigen Formalismus. Die Renaissance wußte nicht mehr, was Seele heißt, kannte nicht mehr die Sehnsucht nach dem Unendlichen, das Metaphysische. (...) Greco ist am Ende seines Lebens Expressionist geworden. In der Erweckung der Seele liegt seine Größe."

209Tintoretto (1519-1594) was an Italian painter and a notable exponent of the Renaissance school.

210Federico Barocci (1528-1612) was an Italian Renaissance painter and printmaker.

journeyed to Spain. Kehrer wonders if it was the romanticism or if the Catholicism of the country that drove him to Madrid and then to Toledo²¹¹.

I present Eisenstein's citation of Kehrer's concepts in *Die Kunst des Grecos* and in *The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice* to determine how he employed the historian's ideas to build his own art historical theories and refine cinematic argumentation.

12.1. Spirituality of Storm over Toledo

Eisenstein's mention of Kehrer starts with the analysis of *Storm over Toledo* in "El Greco y el Cine" and with it the writers' first intersection²¹².

In order to outline Eisenstein's use of Kehrer, I mention his initial argument with Willumsen regarding *Storm over Toledo* in "El Greco y el Cine". Willumsen claims that El Greco used montage in the painting to combine several representations of Toledo from impossible points of views in order narrate the city. Inversely, Eisenstein sees El Greco's montage gesture as aligned to his inner necessity allowing the painter to merge with his artwork and with nature. Consequently, El Greco manages to make his image extremely subjective. Eisenstein uses three main ideas from Kehrer's *Die Kunst des Grecos*, specifically the section dedicated to *Toledo im Gewitter* to highlight the subjective dimension of *Storm*, thus reinforcing his contention against Willumsen.²¹³

211Kehrer, *Die Kunst des Grecos*, 20.

212I will add a section on spirituality in Henri Bergson's work in relation to the visual art.

213Lorente and García , *El Greco en el Cine*, 288.

Firstly: The inner turmoil of El Greco is visible in *Storm over Toledo*, dealing with a cosmic storm about which Eisenstein writes: "Nous ressentons le déchirement intérieur du Greco, son âme privée de paix, entièrement sous l'emprise d'un incessant tourment de l'inquiétude, d'une pression, d'un élan"²¹⁴, quoting Kehr: "Wir fühlen Grecos innere Zerrissenheit, seine Friedlosigkeit und das Treibende, Drägende und Stoßende seiner Seele."²¹⁵

Secondly: Eisenstein writes that this cosmic turmoil changes what the spectator experiences as well as the representation itself. The viewer senses a whirlwind when they look at this painting because each element in it mysteriously loses its rigidity²¹⁶, again quoting Kehr: "Mit elementaren Gewalt zwingt er uns, dies Schauspiel mit zuerleben, reißt uns hinein in den Wirbelwind seiner stürmischen Seele. (...) Der Strauch im Vordergrund wird zur Flamme, in der aller Stoff verbrennt, der Fels verliert seine scharfen Kanten und seine bröckelige Härte, er bekommt samtne Weichheit, und von innen heraus scheint er zu leuchten."²¹⁷

Thirdly, and as a result of the first two ideas, with *Storm*, Eisenstein sees that El Greco obliterates the distance between himself and his artwork, elevating it to a mystical portrait which is unique in the history of art history, writing that: "Haussant ce fragment de la nature jusqu'à l'expression de l'idée métaphysique de l'essence même de l'univers, il témoigne ainsi en même temps de sa totale rupture avec la réalité et n'est plus qu'un indice. Ce paysage, unique dans l'histoire de l'art, provoque une impression absolument

214Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 72.

215Kehr, *Die Kunst des Grecos*, 88.

216Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 73.

217Kehr, *Die Kunst des Grecos*, 88-89.

indélébile. Chez qui avez-vous rencontré une représentation d'orage qui provoque une impression aussi puissante?²¹⁸” He borrows the German historian's exact words which are: “So wird alles Gegständliche aufgelöst und zu einer grandiosen Offenbarung von Grecos Stimmung. Indem er die Natur zum Symbol der metaphysischen Weltidee erhebt, spricht er aus, daß er kein Verhältnis mehr zur Wirklichkeit besitze, daß diese Landschaft nur Stimmung, Andeutung, Ahnung sei. Diese Landschaft, ein Unikum in der Kunstgeschichte, hinterläßt einen unauslöschlichen Eindruck. Wo gibt es eine Gewitterdarstellung, in der innere Anschauung zu solch ungeahnter Deutlichkeit gelangt wäre?²¹⁹”

Some pages later, Eisenstein mentions Kehr²²⁰ indirectly, stating that the historian spoke of dreams when he described *Storm over Toledo*. In dreams, the emotional premise takes center stage and the juxtaposition of facts is free to adopt an unusual rhythm, which Eisenstein expresses as such: “dans le rêve, c'est précisément ce qui est essentiel sur le plan affectif qui se porte au premier plan (...) C'est aussi le sens de la juxtaposition et du regroupement des faits, de l'abandon de

218Eisenstein, “El greco y el cine”, 73.

219Kehr, *Die Kunst des Grecos*, 89.

220Kehr, *Die Kunst des Grecos*, 88. Original citation previously mentioned: “Es ist gleichsam ein Traum, den seine glühende Phantasie erdacht, und den er in dieser Weltuntergangslandschaft mit ihren mächtig durcheinander fahrenden Dunkelheiten und Helligkeiten gemalt hat. Der Vordergrund des Bildes ist geschlossen, aber jenseits des hohen Horizontes scheinen die aus der Unermeßlichkeit heranziehenden Wolken, hinter denen er die Gottgewalten kämpfen läßt, in die Unermeßlichkeit hinabzustützen.” It translates to: “It is, as it were, a dream, imagined by his ardent imagination, he painted this landscape of the world with its powerful darkness and brilliance. The foreground of the picture is closed, but beyond the high horizon, but behind the clouds which are coming out of the immensity, he lets the forces of the gods fight, and seem to sink into immensity”.

maillons sans intérêt et de l'individualisation, à travers le rythme, des événement absolument étrangers à ce rythme.²²¹”

This argument is not only present in but it also traverses *Non-Indifferent Nature*, but in different ways that I explore here.

I interpret Eisenstein's use of Kehrer as having so far, two functions:

Firstly, methodologically: The argument of the subjective nature of *Storm over Toledo* is of great importance to Eisenstein, but it is expressed differently in “El Greco y el Cine” and in *Non-Indifferent Nature*. In the latter, Eisenstein states that acting is the most subjective art form since it merges the artist (actor/actress) with the object that is seen (his/her own performance). He considers painting and literature “semi-subjective” since they imply a relationship of distance between object and creator. He considers the tension in the relationship between artwork and artist to be the reason for the success of El Greco's *Storm over Toledo*, writing that: “The subjective, ecstatic dissolution of him [El Greco] in the apparently “objective” landscape – this is what makes his *Storm over Toledo* so striking and captivating.”²²² In this paragraph, he writes his opinion without referencing anyone, and while the content remains the same in “El Greco y el Cine”, I contend that Eisenstein reorganizes his previous scattered ideas on the topic and freshly reasserts them by constructing a debate between Kehrer and Willumsen. I find that he does so in order to prove that the discussion around the subjectivity of the

221 Eisenstein, “El greco y el cine”, 75-76.

222 Eisenstein, “El Greco”, 120.

artwork was already underway, thus historically and theoretically grounding his own reflections. Within this discussion, he uses Kehr's emphasis on spirituality and the dream-like quality of the painting to confirm the subjective and anti-narrative function which is his personal stance, giving the latter more weight by relying on Kehr's authority as an art historian .

Secondly, implicitly argumentative: Through Kehr, Eisenstein revitalizes what I consider is at the heart of the discussion around the subjective and anti-narrative function of *Storm*: The subjective nature of cinema. Kehr finds that the painting's depiction of the storm has such a unique spiritual quality that it influences its viewer to the point of making the artwork unique in the history of the arts. Eisenstein diverts Kehr's interpretation of the painting to imply the same about film, which can also use images in such a way so subjective so as to lead its audience into a state of ecstasy. Same as *Storm* overtook the distance between itself and its maker imposed by its medium, I contend that Eisenstein is likewise claiming that cinema can do the same.

The second²²³ I consider is *The Martyrdom of St Maurice and the Theban Legion*, which Eisenstein studied to a much smaller extent than *Storm over Toledo*. In this case, I contend that although

223In passing, Eisenstein also mentions the half-figures (demi-personnages) in *El Espolio*. He cites Kehr who said that in this painting El Greco has no feeling for the position of the bodies in the space and uses a quote by another art historian, Carl Justi again Kehr. Justi had said that: *El Espolio* is the most original painting that Spain possesses. In fact, it was Kehr who quoted Justi inside of his text, a quote which Eisenstein only copies. In this case, the director's reliance on Kehr is merely a swift mention. See: Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 88 and Kehr, *Die Kunst des Grecos*, 29.

Eisenstein did not make explicit references to Kehrer, his opinions are in fact informed by him.

12.2. *Cadre introductif of The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice*

Both Eisenstein and Kehrer later move on to *The Martyrdom of St Maurice and the Theban Legion* (1581) commissioned for the Escorial church by King Philippe II. In it, El Greco overturns the function of the painting which is the glorification of the Saint's sacrifice. He does so by relegating the main theme of the artwork; the decapitation of the Saint, to the middleground of the composition, and by letting the Saint's conversation with Roman soldiers strangely occupy the foreground. King Philippe II rejected this artwork, refused to fund El Greco's future projects and pushed him to leave Madrid and head for Toledo.

Although Eisenstein understands Philippe II's dismissal of *The Martyrdom*, he claims that a non-catholic gaze would reveal that the composition works as a cinematic "cadre introductif"²²⁴. This introductory frame opens up the composition and makes the spectator's gaze follow the uninteresting actions in the foreground to finally reach the displaced thematic center in the background; the martyrdom itself. The gaze trails from the front to the back, chasing its main subject : "à travers une action sans importance ou des personnages de second ordre, et avec un thème occupant le fond, on se rapproche peu à peu, de cadre en cadre, du centre thématique déplacé au centre de la composition (...) le

²²⁴Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 90.

Martyre de Saint Maurice semble être l'un de ces premiers cadre intermédiaires dans lesquels, sortant progressivement du fond, le thème proprement dit apparaît au premier plan par le truchement d'une action préliminaire."²²⁵

Moreover, Eisenstein hurriedly relates El Greco's introductory frame to his own film practice when shooting *The General Line* aka *The Old and The New* (1929). In a scene when a poor peasant Marfa visits a Kulak (rich peasant), Eisenstein relies on a display of animals occupying most of the screen's foreground, with the Kulak in the distant background sleeping. From frame to frame, the animals remain in the foreground while Marfa's journey and her important visit to her rich colleague to ask for help is far from our eyes²²⁶. Like El Greco, Eisenstein claims to displace to the depth of the screen the key moment in the film; the Kulak's refusal of aiding the peasant, while maintaining a seemingly irrelevant display of animals directly before us.

Although in this part of his text, Eisenstein does not quote Kehrér, it is Kehrér who points out the creative possibility of this "cadre introductif" but without naming it as such. The historian claims that within the composition of *The Martyrdom*, El Greco repeats the groups of people we see in the foreground; the Saint and his executioners, painting them again wearing the same clothes in the background during the decapitation, but this time he disrupts their proportions: "The frontal figure of Saint Maurice, gazing upon his three companions, does not have the main chromatic accent (koloristisch Hauptakzent) (...) the latter belongs to the figure whose back we can see (the soldier), and who, with the gesture of his left arm brings the rhythm of movement of the image (den Bewegungsrhythmus in das Bild hineinbringen).(...)" The proportions between the figures of the

²²⁵Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 90.

²²⁶Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 90.

mass execution in relation to the foreground and background are 1:2,5. This is no longer a classical proportion."²²⁷

Once this classical proportion has been overturned, Kehrér notices the changes incurred unto the eye of the viewer which has been detained by the bright figures in the foreground (der Betrachtung der Vordergrundsfiguren aufgehalten hat) and which is now forced to seek (wird gezwungen...aufzusuchen) their same colors in the middle ground of the painting²²⁸.

I find that Kehrér's description echoes the director's quote about the "centre thématique déplacé au centre de la composition", and the resulting alteration in the way our eye beholds the artwork but without using the same words. Eisenstein's indirect use of Kehrér again places the debates around the relationship between foreground and background in film-making in a broader art historical context. El Greco was invested in the same question which preoccupies Eisenstein and the latter's indirect use of Kehrér confirms this: Although Kehrér construed that in *The Martyrdom* El Greco repeats the figures to better guide the viewer's eye and although Eisenstein sees in this gesture a cinematic frame, the difference in interpretation still makes out of both painting and cinema into media which are preoccupied with the same representational questions.

This preoccupation implies the use of both cinema and painting as thinking paradigms, thus adding a third function to Eisenstein's use of Kehrér: Reinterpretative.

Since Albera confirms that Eisenstein acquired Kehrér's book in 1937 and not a decade earlier at the time when he shot his film *The General Line*, and since Eisenstein only saw El

²²⁷Kehrér, *Die Kunst des Grecos*, 31.

²²⁸Kehrér, *Die Kunst des Grecos*, 32.

Greco's artworks in London²²⁹ once he left the USSR *after* finishing his film, I conclude that his statement about his own use of the overturned relation between background and foreground inspired by El Greco's *Saint Maurice* is a re-interpretation of his own filmic work through Kehrér's analysis of the painting. Eisenstein aligns his filmmaking to El Greco's work through the art historian whose reflections on the compositional property of the painting instigated Eisenstein's reconsideration of his own directorial decisions when filming Marfa's meeting with the Kulak. Furthermore, Eisenstein uses cinema as a language to better identify descriptive processes in art history: The filmic "cadre introductif" exemplifies Kehrér's art historical analysis of *The Martyrdom*.

When returning to the faces of Janus, Eisenstein's views on cinema not only inspired him to explain art history afresh through numerous compositional factors, but in the case of Kehrér, art and its historians likewise offered him novel methods of looking at his own films.

After having analyzed Eisenstein's debt to Hugo Kehrér and their meeting grounds in terms of concepts and interpretations of paintings, I move on to another major source in "El Greco y el Cine": J.M Charcot and Paul Richer.

13. Jean-Martin Charcot's *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art*

Still in "El Greco y el Cine", his second and more robust text about the Cretan painter, Eisenstein defines ecstasy etymologically as "ex-stasis", meaning a state of being outside of one's self; a frenzy, a vehicle of transportation towards another

229Ronald Bergan, *Eisenstein: A Life in Conflict*, (New York: The Overlook Press, 1999), 169.

state. He claims that his broad definition embraces ecstatic forms, such as religious ones, hysteria, orgasm and 'other phenomena', but each of them has its own internal specificities and its paths of emergence. He does not establish a hierarchy between them nor does he deny the convergence of their symptoms: "la convergence d'un grand nombre de symptômes s'y révélant, ou encore la proximité des aspects psychiques sans rapport mutuel de ces phénomènes entre eux."²³⁰

Wanting to examine the sectors in which ecstasy is visible, he tries to find where its basic formula is realized within a proper field of application, asking: "comment l'"ex-statis" s'accomplit partout par les moyens propres à chaque domaine."²³¹ He compares, on one hand, parts of El Greco's paintings which he deems ecstatic and on the other hand the sketches of hysteric contorting bodies from the founder of modern neurology Jean-Martin Charcot and his disciple Paul Richer²³²'s book *Etudes cliniques sur la grande hystérie ou hystéro-épilepsie* (1885) and *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art* (1887).

Although he mentions both books, he focuses mainly on the content of *Les Démoniaques dans l'art*.

I consider both Eisenstein's text and his drawings featured in *Cinématisme* as equal interlocutors in order to contend that the use he made of Charcot and Richer had less to do with their science and more to do with their approach to

²³⁰Eisenstein, "El Greco y el Cine", 98

²³¹Ibid.

²³²Paul Marie Louis Pierre Richer (17 January 1849 – 17 December 1933) was a French anatomist, physiologist, sculptor and anatomical artist who was a native of Chartres. He was a professor of artistic anatomy at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, as well as a member of the Académie Nationale de Médecine (1898).

art and art history. Moreover, I argue that although ecstasy throughout his article is an umbrella term, it contains several variations and nuances which helped Eisenstein refine his approach to art history.

For clarity and accuracy's sake, I begin with a brief introduction to Charcot, then I proceed to presenting his *Démoniaques*, focusing on Eisenstein's preferred example of St. Nilus. Afterwards, I sketch the intersections between the director and the French writers. I zoom in on the typologies of ecstasy resulting from these intersections, lastly examining his drawings.

Since his doctoral dissertation, Charcot relied on a circularity between observation, images and texts in which "l'écriture emprisonne l'image et le dessin clinique conduit le texte."²³³ After he occupied the first chair of neurology in 1882 at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, he offered professional training and lectured in his field and in psychiatry²³⁴. His work was translated into English, Russian, German and Portuguese and his endeavors stretched well beyond France since he operated internationally by working, among others, with great dukes of Russia during his visit to Moscow and to Saint-Petersburg in 1881 and in 1891²³⁵.

Images throughout Charcot's work operated as a documentation procedure through his sketching of his patients with neurological diseases: "As part of his patients' regular medical records, he drew pictures of their deformities and

233Catherine Bouchara, *Charcot: Une vie avec l'image*, (Paris, Philippe Rey: 2013), 18.

234Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria – Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpetriere*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 18.

235Alla A. Vein, "Jean-Martin Charcot at the Birth of Russian Neurology", *European Neurology*, no.65, (2011),75-81, 79.

contractures to document their evolving illness²³⁶.” But images also operated as a source of inquiry *into* diseases through his reflections on the visual arts for which he had a taste. Charcot reportedly liked the Renaissance and Baroque schools as well as Dutch painters of the 17th century. He “did not just admire works by the painters he liked, but as a scientist, he also criticized ‘impossibilities’ which he found in paintings, such as the inaccurate representation of muscular tone of a ‘possessed’ boy in *La Transfiguration* by Raphael in 1520, which had been alluded to by the great artist and neurologist Charles Bell.”²³⁷ He likewise pushed his colleagues and his students to focus more on the intersections between visual art and neurology²³⁸; a bond which he closely examined with Paul Richer in order to refine his work on hysteria. His pupils were quite international and many of whom came from Russia and Eastern Europe²³⁹. They later transmitted his work back to their home country and helped solidify his reputation²⁴⁰: “On the whole, the respect for Charcot’s work in Russia was exceptionally high, as illustrated by the fact that the first translation of Charcot’s monograph, ‘Localization in Diseases

236 Christopher G. Goetz, Michelle Bonduelle and Tobey Gelfand, *Charcot: Constructing Neurology*, (New York, Oxford University Press: 1995), 88.

237 Julien Bogoussalvsky, “Charcot and Art: From a Hobby to Science,” *European Neurology*, (January 2004), 79.

238 Christopher G. Goetz, Michelle Bonduelle and Tobey Gelfand, *Charcot*, 89.

239 Some of his most famous Russian pupils included A.Ya. Kozhevnikov (1836–1902) and I.P. Merzheevskii (1838–1908) who was one of the first St. Petersburg psychiatrists to be trained in Paris, where he spent 4 years (1872–1875)

240 Vein, “Jean-Martin Charcot at the Birth of Russian Neurology”, 76.

of the Brain', published in 1875, already appeared in Russia in 1876."²⁴¹

Although Eisenstein does not clarify where he first read Charcot, the latter was already known in Russia and in the USSR since his influence on the development of Russian psychiatry was propelled into the 20th century by the work of his psychoneurologist student Vladimir Bekhterev²⁴² who praised his teacher in the opening pages of the *Neurological Bulletin*²⁴³.

A few years before his death, Charcot worked with Richer on *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art* which testifies to his fascination with the

241Vein, "Jean-Martin Charcot at the Birth of Russian Neurology", 77.

242 Bekhterev (1857-1927) Vladimir Mikhailovich Bekhterev was a Russian neurologist and the father of objective psychology. He is best known for noting the role of the hippocampus in memory, his study of reflexes, and Bekhterev's disease.

243 Bekhterev investigated hypnosis and hysteria mainly in relation to occult phenomena such as the evil eye, with crazes and demonic possessions.

Bekhterev's work psychological infection, as in how specific feelings jump from one person to another made him somewhat interesting for Eisenstein who mentioned him inside a brief citation of Theodor Lipps' *Das Wissen vom fremden Ich* in his 1924 article *The Montage of Film Attractions* (See:Film attractions, 49.)Bekhterev was also part of the curriculum which the director taught in 1936 at the Film Institute in Moscow, offering "knowledge of which gives rise to the specific character of the director's craft (...) that allows us to grasp all the varied and, at first sight, independent themes and sections that constitute the actual discipline of direction." (See:Teaching Programme for The Theory and Practice of Direction. How to Teach Direction, 74.). Eisenstein situated him in the third section of his syllabus under the title of "The Theory of Expressive Manifestation. A – A brief history of the question of the laws of man as expresser / A critical analysis of studies of man's expressive movement. 14. Bekhterev" (See: Idem, 86). In this syllabus, Eisenstein does not mention Charcot, in "El Greco y el Cine", he does not mention Bekhterev.

arts and to his capabilities of describing diseases by commenting on a large body of artistic productions presenting external manifestations of hysteria:

“He named hysteria. He distinguished it from epilepsy in particular and from all other mental disorders. In short, he isolated hysteria as a pure nosological object”²⁴⁴ and its visuality proved central to his work at the hospital and when examining the history of the art.

It is his approach to the visual arts that I argue Eisenstein retains from him.

In *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art*, Charcot and Richer study the representation of neurotic hysteria relying on the images of possession in religious art from the early middle ages through the seventeenth century through sixty-seven illustrations of engravings, miniatures, tapestry etc. They choose to neglect the minutes of demonic possessions because the latter are described with less force than their visual counterpart. Veracity is on the side of the arts²⁴⁵. During that time, hysteria was not considered an illness but rather a perversion of the spirit caused by a demon, as they write in the preface that: “Nous nous proposons seulement d'ailleurs de montrer la place que les accidents extérieurs de la névrose hystérique ont prise dans l'Art, alors qu'ils étaient considérés non point comme une maladie, mais comme une perversion de l'âme due à la présence du démon et à ses agissements.”²⁴⁶ The scientists consider neurotic hysteria in all its forms as the

244Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 19.

245Jean-Martin Charcot, Paul Richer, preface to *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art*, by Jean-Martin Charcot, Paul Richer (Paris: Adrien de Lahaye et Emile Lecrosnier, 1887), VI.

246Ibid., V.

disease of the (19th) century: “la maladie spéciale de notre siècle”²⁴⁷, also stating that science has substituted its interpretation as an extraordinary phenomenon²⁴⁸.

The goal which Charcot and Richer set out for themselves through their book and through the reproductions of artworks is both to provoke new discoveries as well as to raise questions concerning the arts, archeology, and history.²⁴⁹ In this preface, they predicate that the Greco-Roman antiquity shied away from depicting sickness and injuries even in cases of battles and found everything imbalanced to be ugly. They set the date of the first demoniac in the 5th or 6th century, in the depiction of the lives of Saints, giving it a sacred character, becoming more sumptuous during the Renaissance.

Important for my research is their minor stop on Spanish artists who were especially keen on depicting ecstasy in the face and in the body, writing that: “Les artistes espagnols se sont exclusivement attachés à reproduire les caractères de l'extase sur le visage et dans les gestes. En revanche, l'école de Breughel, sérieuse sous sa forme excessive et caricaturale, nous a fourni des renseignements d'une valeur toute particulière, restituant avec les mœurs populaires les symptômes précis de la grande névrose, à propos des processions dansantes, désignées sous le nom de « danse de Saint-Guy ».”²⁵⁰

They conclude that once art generally left the symbolic and focused on the mimetic representation of nature, the figure of the demoniac specifically did so as well, becoming a depiction of the reality of a body, presenting signs of sickness that the scientists can decipher: “En parcourant les différentes pièces de notre collection, on peut constater d'une façon générale qu'au fur et à mesure que l'Art, quittant le langage symbolique, se

247Ibid.

248Ibid.,VI.

249Ibid.,VII.

250Ibid.,IX.

transforme par l'étude détaillée de la nature, la figure du démoniaque dépouille les signes de la convention archaïque ou de la fantaisie personnelle pour revêtir des caractères puisés dans la réalité, et qu'il nous a été facile de reconnaître, pour la plupart, comme appartenant à la grande névrose hystérique."²⁵¹

Before analyzing *Les Démoniaques* in relation to Eisenstein, I pause here and move on to the sole example which Eisenstein retains from this book: The Miracle of Saint Nilus by Domenico Zampieri called Domenichino (1581-1641)²⁵², present in the Grotta Ferrata.

13.1 *Saint Nilus*

Eisenstein takes interest in the representation of Saint Nilus because it reunites two symptoms of hysteria, likewise present, according to him, in El Greco's artworks: The eyes turned to the heavens and the characteristic curved body posture which Charcot calls "arc de cercle".

Eisenstein also quotes the entire disagreement between Charcot and Charles Bell²⁵³ from the book regarding the cause of the body posture. Bell thinks that the "arc de cercle" could

251Ibid.,XII-XIII.

252 Domenichino (1581-1641) was an Italian Baroque painter of the Bolognese or Carracci School of painters.

253 Charles Bell (1774-1842) was a Scottish surgeon, anatomist, neurologist, artist, and philosophical theologian. He is noted for discovering the difference between sensory nerves and motor nerves in the spinal cord. He is also noted for describing Bell's palsy.

be due to tetanus since the body is contorted, calling the figure an 'opisthotonos'. But in the artwork, the position of the deployed hands and open mouth contradict a tetanus infection, making the artwork to his eyes inaccurate according to him.

To this argument, Charcot and Richer reply that the "arc de cercle" of the possessed can also be seen in conjunction with arms spread wide and mouth open, hence remaining indicative of hysteria and not an inexact drawing of an opisthotonos:

"(Eisenstein writes) Il existe à propos de cette oeuvre, une controverse à laquelle il ne serait pas inutile que nous nous mêlions vu notre intérêt pour le montage, et parce que les positions des bras des anges du Greco s'en rapprochent eux aussi. Or, c'est sur cette position des bras que porte la controverse. Charcot et Richer écrivent:

(Eisenstein quotes the scientists): "L'attitude figurée par le Dominiquin n'est autre que celle que nous avons désignée sous le nom d'« d'arc de cercle ». Tout le tronc rigide est courbé en arrière, les membres inférieurs contracturés dans l'extension ne reposent que sur les gros orteils... La convulsion a envahi aussi la face; les yeux sont convulsés en haut... L'attitude des bras est la seule partie de cette figure qui... puisse donner prise à la critique. Nous savons, en effet, que pendant « contorsion », les poings sont d'ordinaire fermés et les avant-bras plutôt en supination qu'en pronation."

(Eisenstein writes) C'est également ainsi que s'exprime Charles Bell (qu'ils citent pour cette raison):

(Eisenstein quotes the scientists quoting Bell): Ce serait... la vraie position de l'espèce de contraction musculaire ou de tétanos appelée opisthotonos, parce que le corps est renversé en arrière, si les mains n'étaient pas déployées, les doigts ouverts (...)

(Eisenstein writes): Néanmoins Charcot et Richer récusent l'accusation d'imprécision, présumant qu'il ne s'agit pas du type de tétanos qu'avait en vue Bell:

(*Eisenstein quotes the scientists' counterargument to Bell*): C'est à l'hystérie, pensons-nous, qu'il convient de rattacher l'attitude donnée par le Dominiquin à son jeune démoniaque. Les critiques de Charles Bell tombent alors d'elles-mêmes; l'"arc de cercle" hystérique peut exister avec l'ouverture de la bouche l'écartement des membres supérieurs."²⁵⁴

Returning to St. Nilus, Eisenstein distinguishes himself from Bell and from Charcot and Richer when analyzing the artwork and attempts another explanation for the position of the arms through cinema, an explanation which guides his work on El Greco as well:

"A mon avis, le bras ne correspondent pas réellement à la position et à la tension de tout personnage indépendamment de la vraisemblance ou de l'invraisemblance d'une telle position dans l'hystérie. Et je pense que, s'ils ne correspondent pas à cette pose, c'est chose voulue et intentionnelle (à moins qu'un sentiment ne l'ait dictée à l'artiste). Dans cette attitude, les mains ont adopté la pose la plus stéréotypée pour exprimer le ravissement lorsque descend la grâce. Et je pense que la figure du jeune garçon doit tout simplement exprimer deux stades de son état: non seulement l'état de frénésie qu'exprime tout son corps à l'exception des bras, mais encore la guérison miraculeuse manifestée dans ses mains réagissant à la descente de la grâce. Ce processus de guérison, à savoir de "retour à soi", n'est pourtant pas rendu par une image intermédiaire, mais une fois encore, de façon cinématographique. Il réunit deux états successifs dissociés et minutieusement tracés: à la représentation de fait de la

254Eisenstein, "El Greco y el Cine", 100 (in italics are my inserts)

courbure en arc dans l'hystérie est mécaniquement adjointe la pose conventionnelle d'accueil du Saint-Esprit!"²⁵⁵

14.. Intersections between Eisenstein and Charcot

After having presented the textual sources which Eisenstein relies on for his article, I highlight the two intersections of his ideas with those of the French scientists which I found, and I mark the impact of his answer to the debate between Charcot and Bell on his interpretation of El Greco.

14.1. Hysteric Spanish art

The first intersection between Eisenstein and Charcot and Richer is the presence of hysteria in Spanish painting. While the scientists excluded the Greco-Roman antiquity from the history of the depiction of hysteria as I stated above, they considered Spanish art as being particularly engaged with the disease. They allocated a footnote to possible examples of it, citing Goya's *Exorcisé*, a painting attributed to Berruguette depicting an exorcism, both at the Prado museum, and an 18th century painting at the St Domingo convent in Salamanca representing Saint Ignace delivering a possessed woman with green demons escaping from her mouth, as paragons of the illness²⁵⁶.

While the director did not analyze the artworks they referred to, I argue that he relied on their opinions about Spanish art's hysteric images generally as an argument for his theory on El Greco's ecstasy. I claim this because all ecstatic artworks he

²⁵⁵Eisenstein, "El Greco y el Cine", 102.

²⁵⁶Footnote 1 in Jean-Martin Charcot, Paul Richer, preface to *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art*, by Jean-Martin Charcot, Paul Richer (Paris: Adrien de Lahaye et Emile Lecrosnier, 1887), IX.

choses fall into El Greco's Spanish Toledo period, as in after his move away from Italy to the Spanish city in 1577: *The Resurrection* (1600), *The Pentecost* (1596), *Espolio* which was commissioned in 1579 by the son of Diego de Castilla, the dean of the Cathedral of Toledo, and *Laocoon* (1610-1614), as I develop later.

14.2. Location of hysteria

The second intersection between Eisenstein and Charcot is the location of hysteria, stemming specifically with his example of Saint Nilus: In the eyes and in the curved body. But Eisenstein contends that the reason behind the contentious position of the arms of Nilus is his body being the locus of two opposing representations in a single moment: The body without the arms depicts a frenzy and the arms without the body depict the healing as the Holy Spirit descends upon the possessed.

Instead of representing the journey from frenzy to healing as a process unfolding over time, Saint Nilus combines two contradictory stages of it in a single image: Frenzy and healing in the same moment, and not frenzy *and then* healing. Eisenstein also argues but without further explanation that this was done mechanically (*mécaniquement adjointe*)²⁵⁷.

I interpret this as his supposition that since the image reunites two conflicting representations, it must have done so "mechanically" by using montage, montage being the dispositif which allows for such a juxtaposition in order to move the viewer. For this reason, these two indicators are

²⁵⁷Eisenstein, "El Greco y el Cine", 102.

cinematic and are divorced from both tetanus and hysterical readings.

Eisenstein does not elaborate this point any further nor does he mention St. Nilus again, I claim, because he uses this representation as a prototype or a blueprint for the further analysis of other oeuvres and turns the symptoms it features, when seen in El Greco's paintings, to a cinematic manifestation of ecstasy.

After having pointed out these broad first intersections between Charcot and Eisenstein, I theorize that Eisenstein's use of him incurred a refinement of his theory of ecstasy in El Greco's work.

15. Typologies of ecstasy

Since his 1929 trip to the French capital and his meeting with the vice-president of the Psychoanalytical Society of Paris René Allendy²⁵⁸, Eisenstein became aware of ecstasy and started studying it, focusing on its religious manifestations²⁵⁹. Throughout the 1930s, this notion not only became the engine of his writings on the Pathos; a central question to his filmic practice, but it also motivated part of his distinction between cinematic and non-cinematic paintings, as I argue in regards to El Greco.

Returning to "El Greco y el Cine", Eisenstein finds that *The Resurrection*, lends itself to an ecstatic rendering since it deals with the transformation of Jesus, and with the instant when he exits one state and then enters another. He sees this

258 René Allendy (1889-1942) was a French psychoanalyst and homeopath.

259 Ada Ackerman, "Les préoccupations ésotériques d'Eisenstein," *La Revue Russe* 29 (2007): 132.

transformation in the eyes of Jesus which convey the intensity of this swift moment. They are not turned away from the heaven but more repelled by the earth, same is in *Espolio*: “La Résurrection, par exemple, est prise dans l’instantané, le *flash* de la sortie d’un état et du passage à un autre (...) des yeux brillants qui ne sont pas tant tournés que révoltés, dirais-je, vers le ciel.”²⁶⁰

This intensity extends itself to other bodies in the painting, seen in El Greco’s drawing of the falling man in yellow and the figures seen from behind in *The Pentecost*: “Ce ne sont pas des raccourcis qui montrent les personnes; il ne s’agit pas ici de raccourcis – mais des positions dans lesquelles sont placés les personnages. Et celles-ci sont les poses des états extrêmes de l’extase, de ces états qui courbent l’homme en un arc caractéristique.”²⁶¹In *The Pentecost*, each apostle, the one on the left of the viewer in green and brown (apostle 1) and the other one on the right of the viewer in light blue and yellow (apostle 2), represents a different stage during the happening of hysteria within each of them falling successively as the event unfolds. This process of unfolding extends itself outside of *The Pentecost* and into the falling man in yellow in El Greco’s *The Resurrection* (apostle 3). In order to reconstruct this process, Eisenstein executes his own form of montage, writing that the process of flexion begins with Jesus’s eyes turned towards the heaven in *Espolio*, then it is followed by apostle 1 and then by apostle 2, both from *The Pentecost*, it culminates in in apostle 3 wearing the yellow cloak from *The Resurrection* and sketching the isolated figures. “Telles sont, en somme, les phases successives de cette flexion extatique en arc

260Eisenstein, “El Greco y el Cine”, 99

261Ibid.

caractérisant les divers stades des états frénétiques, parmi lesquels l'hystérie occupe la place d'honneur²⁶²."

After studying these paintings, Eisenstein moves on to El Greco's *Laocoon and his Sons* and notices and sketches some peculiarities in the composition:

The figure on the left hand side of the viewer of the painting adopts a posture in the form of an arc with its arms stretching deep into the painting's background, while the second figure on the right hand side of the painting also adopts a circular body position with its legs, up to the knees, raised in the air. In the middle is the Laocoon with his eyes turned towards the heavens like Jesus Christ in the *Espolio*²⁶³.

According to Eisenstein, El Greco finds it insufficient to merely draw a figure with an arched posture and ecstatic eyes, preferring to work on the level of the whole. The painting's *modelé*, as in the disposition of the volumes of the body in the light, is also imprinted by an arch: "Le *modelé* pictural qui imprime cet arc".²⁶⁴

Eisenstein sketches the circular motion that emerges *out* of the composition, going from the figure on the left, over the Laocoon, landing onto the figure on the right specifically on the edge of its knee, extending itself to the outline of its body. (ill.2)

The presence of this movement leads the film-maker to conclude that El Greco goes from the representation *of* ecstatic figures to an *ecstatic* representation: "Car si telle est la représentation d'êtres en état d'extase, el Greco n'en reste pas là; il passe de la représentation d'extatiques à la représentation extatique des personnages. L'"arc de cercle" de l'extase passe instamment du

262Ibid.

263Eisenstein, "El Greco y el Cine", 102.

264Ibid.

domaine de la représentation d'un comportement de personnages à celui de la représentation plastique même de ceux-ci. Ce n'est déjà plus la pose du personnage qui est arquée, mais le modelé pictural qui imprime cet arc à une figure dont la conduite est tout simplement d'être normalement debout. Ainsi du domaine du *comportement* qu'il prescrit à un personnage, nous passons déjà à celui du traitement pictural de ce dernier. Et de la phase de mise en scène des personnages, nous passons à la section suivante – à celle de leur modelé plastique."²⁶⁵

Firstly, I structure the ideas that underly the text by highlighting the typologies embedded in the numerous mentions of paintings and their relation to ecstasy, giving each of them a category and a name. I also present this construction clearly in the form of a table demarcating the process by which Eisenstein recognized ecstasy in the oeuvres. Secondly, knowing that the director links cinematic artworks containing movement to an agitated eye movement, I argue that the typologies differ from each other also on the grounds of promoting a different gaze. Lastly, by way of conclusion, I explore Eisenstein's drawing and arrangement of figures from El Greco's painting side by side to sketches copied from Charcot's books in order to better elucidate their dialog with art history.

Same as Charcot saw in St Nilus the two markers of hysteria; the upturned gaze and the contorted body, Eisenstein sees in El Greco's paintings the same two indicators referring, in the context of his art history, to ecstasy. Ecstasy in the part is a necessary condition for the ecstasy in the whole.

265Ibid.

But what is specific to each of El Greco's oeuvre is the level of treatment of these two symptoms of ecstasy; as in to what extent they are integrated into the artwork, and the implication of this treatment on the gaze of the audience.

15.1. Ecstasy within the image

In the first category, ecstasy in *The Resurrection* is contained within the image²⁶⁶.

The painting includes the visual indicators by limiting them to specific parts of its surface, in the face of Jesus and in the body posture of the falling man in yellow, which Eisenstein observes. This image operates as a "flash", depicting the precise moment of Jesus' transformation from one state into another. Like a photograph, it imposes a look upon the single artwork in one instant.

15.2. Ecstasy as meta-image

In the second category, ecstasy is a meta-image seen in *The Resurrection* in tandem with *Espolio* and *The Pentecost*. It surfaces *out* of specific parts in all of these paintings.

These parts, starting with Christ's face in *Espolio* and continuing with the body postures of his apostles 1 and 2 in *The Pentecost* and then the third apostle in *The Resurrection*, operate like an event unfolding in time and increasing in intensity: Jesus' gaze may be serene but the bodies seen after it in the other painting seem to fall to the ground more rapidly with each image.

²⁶⁶See chapter on The Resurrection in the first part of the dissertation.

Only after Eisenstein isolates these parts and places them side by side, as if they were close-ups one after the other, does he manage to reconstruct the ecstasy which arises out of them (ill.8).



**1- Jesus'face from
Espolio**



**2- Apostle 1 from
The Pentecost**



**3- Apostle 2 from
The Pentecost**



**4- Apostle 3 from
The Resurrection**

Ill.11: Ecstasy as meta-image in *Espolio*, *The Pentecost*, *The Resurrection*.

Eisenstein's argument for this type of ecstasy is the presumably deliberate manner in which the face and the bodies are staged according to El Greco's will in order to have a specific

effect on the eyes beholding them and are thus not a mere display of painting technique serving to illustrate contortions. Moreover, he thought of *The Pentecost* and of *The Resurrection* in tandem also because they were both conceived as a pair²⁶⁷. Therefore, from the get-go, one is a continuation of the other, but not in the order he intended: Jesus is disrobed to be tortured in *Espolio*, then he dies, is resurrected, and then the Holy Spirit visits the apostles. For this reason, Christ's journey does start with *Espolio*, but *the Resurrection* should take place before the *Pentecost*.

I find that Eisenstein's inversion of their order signifies his utilization of these artworks as an art historical source meant to inform him more about the functioning of ecstasy beyond the specific medium of painting and namely in cinema and less about the historical significance attached to them in their religious context.

This spreading of ecstatic indicators throughout parts from several paintings requires a horizontal gaze capable of capturing the event, and of moving from one still image to the next. For Eisenstein, as he had written in *The Dynamic Square*, a horizontal space known to us through theater implies a likewise horizontal gaze which obliterates the depiction of conflict and the further agitation of the viewer's eye²⁶⁸.

15..3. Ecstasy in the whole and in the part

Unlike *The Resurrection*, in *The Laocoon* which Eisenstein briefly mentions, ecstasy not only touches upon the parts (the Laocoon's eyes gazing upwards, the bodies of his sons

267 Troutman, *El Greco*, 35.

268 See chapter on "Format" in El Greco's "The Resurrection".

contorted) but it is manifested in the whole. This third category is, I contend, the most cinematic, because it imposes a more agitated gaze.

El Greco organizes all visual elements around ecstasy: The body is arched, the snake forms an arch, the rock upon which Laocoon is laying down is also a circle, and the way the clouds fall on unto the earth ties the composition together with the second figure on the right. What distinguishes *Laocoon* from the other artworks by El Greco and also from other typologies of ecstasy is that it is not merely a representation of ecstatic figures but that the image itself *is* ecstatic, owing to its capability of invoking a circular motion.

Eisenstein retraces this movement through his illustration (ill.9) and reclaims it for the sake of cinema since it expands the medium of painting by stretching out the possibilities of the eye beholding it, since this movement penetrates all aspects of the representation; the attitude, *traitement picturale*, and *modèle*: “Ainsi du domaine du *comportement* qu’il prescrit à un personnage, nous passons déjà à celui du *traitement pictural* de ce dernier. Et de la phase de mise en scène des personnages, nous passons à la section suivante – à celle de leur *modèle plastique*.”²⁶⁹. It necessitates therefore both an instantaneous ‘flash’ gaze to apprehend the two ecstatic indicators as well as a similar circular gaze to apprehend the circular motion within the representation that goes in loops from the edges to the center, from the foreground to the background, over and over again.



Ill.12: El Greco's *Laocöon* with the movement in the modelé and the body outlines highlighting it.

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Example	Resurrection	Espolio, Pentecost, Resurrection	Laocoon and his sons
Operation	Observation	Montage (extraction of close-ups as parts out of the paintings as a whole)	Sketching the movement and reclaiming it
Where	-Jesus' eyes -Man in yellow	-Christ's face (E) -Apostles' bodies (P) -Man in yellow (R)	-Laocoon's eyes - Bodies of sons) -disposition of parts in the composition
Gaze	Photographic (instant)	Horizontal theatrical gaze	-Circular (loop). -Flash

After having excavated the typologies of ecstasy, by way of conclusion, I comment on Eisenstein's sketches that accompany the article extracted out of El Greco's paintings set side by side to Charcot and Richer's sketches.

16. Eisenstein's drawings: From hysteria to ecstasy

Eisenstein's draws the second typology of ecstasy; ecstasy as meta-image and each of its stages.

In Albera's book *Cinématisme*, Eisenstein's sketches of El Greco's ecstatic body parts is featured on the left, and their equivalent (pendants exacts) extracted from Charcot and Richer's

two books are featured on the right²⁷⁰. He starts with Jesus's face in *Espolio* and finds the study of the possession after Rubens at the museum of Vienna to be its suitable counterpart. This reference is extracted from *Etudes Cliniques*.²⁷¹ (ill.10)



Ill.13: Jesus' face from *Espolio* (left) and the Possessed of Rubens' face (right).

When putting these two images side by side and zooming in only on the eyes as Eisenstein claimed, I conclude that both gazes are directed upwards, but El Greco's painting is marked by a serenity that its frenzied *pendant* with the open mouth lacks.

As for the contorted body in *The Pentecost*, Eisenstein sees Charles Bell's *Opisthotonos* as its first equivalent, quoting both Bell's *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression* as

270Eisenstein, "El Greco y el Cine", 101.

271Paul Richer, *Etudes cliniques sur la grande hystérie ou hystéro-épilepsie*, (Paris: A. Delahaye et E. Lecrosnier, 1885), 943.

Connected with the Fine Arts (1847), and writing below it “p.51” which refers to the correct page number in *Les Démoniaques* from which he copied this sketch. Eisenstein marks its second equivalent as the body from the “période de clownisme de la grande attaque hystérique, contorsion: arc de cercle” also stemming from Charcot’s *Démoniaques*²⁷². (ill.11)



Ill.14: Apostle 1 from *The Resurrection* (left), Bell’s opisthotonos (center), and Richer’s drawing from the periode de clownisme (right).

When comparing these images and especially when rotating Bell’s sketches and the one from the clownism period, I find that the body postures share the same arched back and raised hands, but while the apostle in El Greco’s artwork is standing with his arms raised in glorification of Jesus and his gaze directed towards him, his disposition strikes me as more

272Charcot,Richer, *Les Démoniaques dans l’Art*, 93.

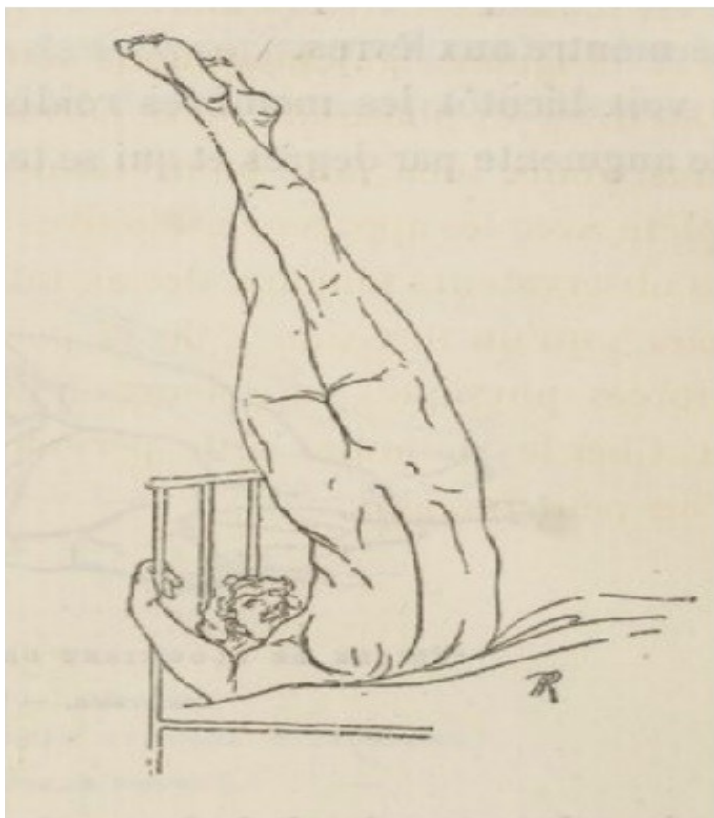
surprised than contorted, while the Opisthotonos' deformations and those of the clownisme seem much too radical.

Moreover, the falling man in yellow (apostle 3) from *The Resurrection* is put on the same level as Charcot's drawing from *variété de la contorsion chez un homme* which Eisenstein correctly marks as "p.96"²⁷³. (ill.12) In this case, I can see that the two bodies are similar with the hands on the side and the legs in the air, but I would not claim that there is an exact equivalence²⁷⁴, on the grounds of the apostle's body being more loose and relaxed in its fall and not as rigid as its scientific counterpart. Comparing these sketches, I realize that Eisenstein attempts to find a scientific justification for his choice of figures and for his equation of Charcot's hysteria with his own ecstasy without bringing any further argumentation in order to reassert his hypothesis, preferring the consideration of similar body postures as "des pendants exacts".

²⁷³Charcot, Richer, *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art*, 96.

²⁷⁴Eisenstein also sketches a close-up on the hands on the hands of angle in El Greco's *The Opening of the Fifth Seal* (1608-1614) and next to them, the hand in the "griffe radicale" position taken from Paul Richer, *Etudes cliniques sur la grande hystérie ou hystéro-épilepsie*, (Paris: A. Delahaye et E. Lecrosnier, 1885), 564.





Ill.15: Apostle 3 from *The Resurrection* (above) and the contorted body from Richer's periode de clownisme below).

Here, I re-assert my initial contention of Eisenstein having used Charcot as an art historical source and not as a scientist.

The knowledge which Charcot produced at La Salpêtrière allowed him not only to discredit religious tales of demonic possessions but also to position hysteria as an observable manifestation on the surface of the body, as opposed to a hidden structural nervous disease²⁷⁵. For this reason, he sought to find its representations in his patients through the use of various technological media such as photography, myograph, tachistoscopes, publishing the evidence of hysteria in *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* by Bourneville and P.Regnard (1878).

The visual arts and their history likewise provided him with further evidence of the disease. As Didi-Huberman argued, Charcot's work and his use of images helped him form an eye on the lookout in art history, for the aesthetic canon of the Demoniatic although the latter stems from a long European tradition of representing the insane²⁷⁶. Charcot focused on it "with a certain notion of Baroque art, a certain use of iconography understood, this time, in its most traditional meaning of pictorial representations."²⁷⁷

I find it significant that out of the multitude of Charcot's oeuvres, Eisenstein cites the two books which do not feature photography and which focus on sketching and on the reproduction of artworks, favoring *Les Démoniaques* and *Etudes Cliniques* over *Iconographie Photographique*. I claim that what the director sought and found in Charcot had less to do with the nosological take on hysteria, or even innovative approaches to the media of Charcot's time that could capture hysteric convulsions, and more to do with his approach to the arts.

275 Pasi Valiaho, *Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema circa 1900*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 67.

276 Sander L.Gilman, *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 359.

277Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 279.

Throughout his writings on the neurologist, Eisenstein's method is marked by a theoretical flexibility which is premised at the beginning of the pages. By stating that ecstasy is an umbrella term embracing other phenomena which present similar external manifestations to it²⁷⁸, Eisenstein allows himself to freely use sources and research around these other phenomena, hysteria being his main example, without the pressure of proving the concrete existence of a mutual rapport or strict equivalences. With this generalization, Eisenstein neutralizes the specificity of hysteria.

His use of St. Nilus exemplifies this approach: By not questioning the validity of Charcot's work and by using and replying to his speculations, his method of dealing with art history as a source, Eisenstein re-purposes St. Nilus for his own theories. He circumvents both Charcot and Richer's predication of Nilus having reached the second stage of hysteria in which bodily contortions such as the "arc de cercle" are manifested, as well as Bell's illness-based approach to the image resulting from Tetanus. Eisenstein isolates the two visual indicators of hysteria which are the gaze towards heaven and the arc en cercle body posture, and reworks them into ecstasy in cinematic paintings.

Nevertheless, his use of Charcot and this example may have been malleable but it is not without impact on his art history.

Charcot allowed Eisenstein to overtake the schematic nature of his own approach to art history, fine-tuning his ideas and introducing nuances that were previously unmentioned. Indeed, in "El Greco y el Cine", Eisenstein's attention to the

²⁷⁸Eisenstein, "El Greco y el Cine", 98

variations of ecstasy marks a turning point when compared to his previous article on the painter. When talking about ecstasy in cinematic paintings, the director had made it clear that one is not necessary for the existence of the other. In fact, a painting can be cinematic without being ecstatic as Eisenstein previously claimed in relation to Valentin Serov's portrait of Maria Yermolova which, although uses cinematic compositional factors, does not have an ecstatic touch, nor does it feature an inner explosion²⁷⁹. Moreover, when analyzing Piranesi and El Greco, Eisenstein had put their single artworks into categories of either unecstatic (The Dark Prison, View and Plan of Toledo, The Expulsion) or ecstatic (Carcere with Staircase, Storm over Toledo, The Resurrection), predicating a transformation of one image into the other, allowing it to acquire this new quality.

Consequently, this categorical distinction between "ecstatic" and "unecstatic" phases in the artist's life and work crumbles under the weight of the nuances present in El Greco's oeuvre that are made detectable by the two indicators of ecstasy following St. Nilus' example and Charcot's hysteria.

My analysis brought these nuances which form specific typologies to the light.

17. Albert Giesecke's Meister der Grafik

Eisenstein returns to more traditional art historical sources in his article *Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Form*. In it, he

279Ibid.,105.

claims that he first²⁸⁰ became familiar with Piranesi and would later start collecting his works, thanks to Italian theater historian Giulio Ferrari's (1858-1934) book *La Scenografia* (1902, Milan)²⁸¹, which he found at his friend Sergei Zimin's house²⁸². He also cites as Albert Giesecke who wrote the first monograph on Piranesi, titled *Meister der Grafik: Giovanni Battista Piranesi* 1911, Leipzig : Klinkhardt & Biermann). Eisenstein mentions Ferrari only once and Giesecke repeatedly²⁸³, and for this reason, I focus on Giesecke.

The monograph contains no biographical information about him but is far from short on content about the artist and on reproductions of his etchings.

From my reading of his book, it seemed to me that Giesecke went to Hamburg, Paris, Rome, and Venice to find the artworks he considered. Judging by his extensive literature

280Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 85.

281 In the fourth chapter of *La Scenografia* titled "Golden Age of Architectural Set Design", he dedicates six pages to Piranesi, focusing on his Carceri etchings as an important historical phase for the theater, thus considering him an "inventor of scenographic motives" rather than a mere architect. Furthermore, he sees Piranesi's overall work as a "luminous copy of the landscape of Rome and of the multi-form physiognomy of the eternal city and the incomparable scenographic fantasy"; a fantasy which best invokes the "splendid sublime and enchanting Italian spirit (Italianità)". But Ferrari neither defines the Italian spirit nor the positive traits that the artwork should contain in order for it to be considered authentically Italian. (See: Ferrari, *La Scenografia*, 113-138).

282Footnote about Zimin present in previous chapter on Piranesi

283 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Forms." *Oppositions*, no. 11 (1977): 86, 93, 103, 104.

review, he was likewise fluent in at least English, French, and Italian, in addition to his native German²⁸⁴.

I found the right Albert Giesecke (1881-1966)²⁸⁵ in the *Zentrale Datenbank Nachlässe* of the German Federal Archives which state that ²⁸⁶his estate is preserved at the German art archives of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum of Nuremberg (GNM). Although his biography was missing online, his job is clearly indicated as an art historian²⁸⁷. In the course of my

284 Researching library databases such worldcat.org lead me to another Albert A. Giesecke (1883-1968). This Giesecke was an academic and politician who operated mainly in Peru and who became the rector of the National University of San Antonio Abad del Cusco (Peru) as well as the mayor of the town of Cusco. He was clearly not the author I was looking for, since he reached Machu Picchu in 1911 after a long journey; the year of the publication of the monograph on Piranesi. See: Daniel W. Gade, "Albert A Giesecke (1883-1968), A Philadelphian in the Land of the Incas, <https://www.penn.museum/documents/publications/expedition/PDFs/48-3/Gade.pdf>

285 Zentrale Datenbank Nachlässe, Nachlässe G, Giesecke, Albert (1881-1966), http://www.nachlassdatenbank.de/viewsingle.php?category=G&person_id=53268&asset_id=58785&sid=7720caa858888dcbc983e

286 Zentrale Datenbank Nachlässe, Nachlässe G, Giesecke, Albert (1881-1966), http://www.nachlassdatenbank.de/viewsingle.php?category=G&person_id=53268&asset_id=58785&sid=7720caa858888dcbc983e

287 Following a telephone conversation with the publishing house Klinkhardt & Biermann's new owner, Ms. Annette von Altenbockum, she told me that she has no archives or records of correspondences or contracts with any of its writers since its estate was burned down in World War II. Moreover, the history of the institution was quite tumultuous, having changed owners several times; all made worse by a flood which the publishing house barely managed to outlive. Therefore, very few documents about its history or its contributors remain. Ms. Von Altenbockum who bought Klinkhardt & Biermann in 2010 is not currently undertaking

research in Nuremberg, I discovered that Albert Giesecke's archives reached the GNM in 1990 through his daughter Roswitha Giesecke²⁸⁸. The art historian's estate is relatively well-organized with several files sorted out by artist.²⁸⁹ The section dealing with Piranesi is much smaller in comparison to the amount of research Giesecke has undertaken about other artists²⁹⁰. Nevertheless, the Italian etcher's importance cannot

an archival research about the institution's history due to lack of staff, but she has managed to make sure that the company survives and keeps selling art books.

288 Thank you to Ms. Laura Metz for supplying me with this information.

289 Supplementary holdings can be found at the Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (Institut für Buchwesen) featuring Giesecke's correspondence with art historian and director of the Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts (Museum der bildende Künste) Richard Graul and the latter's reply. The inventory number is: NL Graul, Richard, I.C-3. The Mainz archives also contain exchanges between Giesecke and another art historian named Ludwig Grote regarding Giesecke's publication about Albrecht Dürer. But I did not consult those since the material is scarce and is not related to Piranesi.

290 A particularly recurrent name is Dürer's, followed by Cranach, East-Asian art, the two Bruegels, and Rubens among others. The "Albrecht Dürer" folders contain requests that Giesecke sent out for prints from several museums (especially the Bibliothek des Museums der bildende Künste Leipzig) and for books directly from their publishers dealing with the German artist's representation of death, the devil, animals, horoscopes, the Apocalypse and melancholia; all of which are themes he investigated. Several other boxes are dedicated to Cranach and to his correspondences with Dürer, ideas about Schopenhauer, Goethe etc. Giesecke jotted down his complex ideas on any kind of paper he could find and did not restrict himself to German, but likewise wrote in Latin. Drafts upon drafts are intercepted by random postcards sent to him or which he collected, along with

be denied, since Giesecke received his PhD thanks to his work on him.

In the folder marked "Piranesi", I found Giesecke's doctoral dissertation titled „ Studien über Giov. Batt. Piranesi (1720-1778) Kapitel I und II“. Its cover reads "Inaugural-Dissertation for the obtainment of the Dr. title at the faculty of philosophy (zur erlangung der Doktorwürde genehmigt von der philosophischen Fakultät) at the Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin". The name of the candidate is marked as „Albert Giesecke from Leipzig“. The date of the defense at the bottom of the page reads: „Day of the Doctorate (Tag der Promotion): March 7th 1911“, thus making it the oldest document at the Giesecke estate.

The first page of the dissertation names the examiners (Referenten) present at the defense as: Prof. Dr. Wölfflin and

envelops preserved with his address on them: Envelopes addressed to him contained the following markings: Herr Dr. Albert Giesecke (701 Leipzig – cl Mozartstr, 10) / Dr AG Berlin-Gruenewald Douglasstr. 30a. An envelop addressed to his daughter reads: Frau Rowsiwrtha Giesecke (address 65 Mainz Goettelmannstr. 4? Altenheim).

For the most part, he typed his manuscripts and corrected them by hand. The finished manuscripts are also available in the same folders. The time-frame of this research is roughly the mid 50s until the mid 60s, and it is, in my opinion, the best documented part of his work. The material available here is much more substantial than his earlier work on Piranesi. This leads me to believe that over time, he either gradually became more careful with his own archives and started preserving them assiduously, or that either World Wars took their tolls on his documents. In a folder dedicated to his publications "Veröffentlichungen", I found the following two articles, but scattered notes about his person testify to several other numerous publications: Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft, Band XXIII Heft 1/ 4 Berlin 1969, and Sonderdruck aus dem Gutenberg-Jahrbuch 1944/1949, "Das Schriftmetall Gutenbergs" - AG.

Prof. Dr. Kekule von Stradonitz²⁹¹. In the center of the same page is the following marking: „With the approval of the faculty, printed here is the first part of the research only. The other parts; chapters III, IV, and the appendix, will appear together along with the first section in the publishing house Klinkhard & Biermann's series titled „Meister der Grafik““.²⁹²

Only the typed texts of both the dissertation and the published monograph are present in the archives and none of the hand-written drafts, other research about Piranesi or published articles, assuming there were ones. I found no information as to Giesecke's journeys to the various cities and countries in possession of Piranesi's prints, nor any contact between him and any of the museums he mentioned in his book. I compared both manuscripts from the monograph and from GNM's documents, and with the exception of linguistic rephrasing and orthographic changes which the author executed (judging by the handwriting), there are no substantial differences. Consequently, the documents preserved were typed at a rather advanced stage in his research, shortly before his publication in „Meister der Grafik“.²⁹³

291 The examiner's first name is not given but I assume it is Prof. Dr. Reinhard Kekule von Stradonitz (1839-1911) who was a German archaeologist and the founder of modern iconology, serving as a director of antique sculptures and vases at the Berlin Museum.

292 Original text reads: „Mit Genehmigung der hohen Fakultät kommt hier nur der erster Teil der ganzen Arbeit zum Abdruck. Der andere Teil, Kap.III, IV und der Anhang, wird zusammen mit dem ersten 1911 im Verlage der Firma Klinkhard & Biermann zu Leipzig in der Folge „Meister der Grafik.“ erscheinen.“

293 I found no trace of another handwriting which leads me to believe that there were no notes, drafts, or markings by any of his professors. I also found no trace of any communication with

I highlight that he was never formally affiliated to a university as a professor or lecturer, but worked more as a “freelance” teacher at several institutions. He later worked in the insurance business, most likely to finance his numerous travels, which testify to a very zealous mind and a prolific output. Art history was clearly central to his life and scientific endeavors as I

the publishing house Klinkhard & Biermann or of the contract which they may have signed. In another folder titled “Piranesi abb. (Fotos)”, I found the test reproductions of the prints that the author was selecting for his monograph which he received from the press of Ernst Hedrich Nachf. GmbH – Ellenburgerstr. 11 (Leipzig) and which were dated 8-July 1911. Around the edges of the prints, he occasionally wrote with a pencil some remarks about their origin, the series they belong to, their quality and their size which he repeatedly found “zu klein”. Furthermore, in his possession was the cover of librarian Francesco Cerroti (1806-1887)’s book *Lettere e memorie autografe ed inedite di artisti tratte dai manoscritti della Corsiniana*, published in Rome with the marking of a typeface plant (?) “Stabilimento Tipografico, Corso 387”, dated 1860, as well as the certificate of the baptism of Piranesi, which reads: “Attestato di battesimo di Giovanni Battista Piranesi” and the transcription is the following:

Regno d’Italia /Basilica Patriarcale di S. Marco / in Venezia
Certifico io sottoscritto sacrista in / detta Basilica che: Zuanne Batti-/sta fio de Angelo Piranese [Tassa ?ndi 50] / tagliapietra de Giacomo e di / Mad. Laura sua moglie nato / il giorno 4 quattro ottobre 1720 mille-/settecentoventi e fu battezzato il giorno otto 8 novembre anno domini. /In fede di che / Don Luigi Bagato /Dalla Basilica [...] N. S. Marco /Venezia 19 settembre 1909

The book cover and the baptism certificate are the only documents I found that act as a source of Giesecke’s research on Piranesi.

Although these findings are quite significant since they historicize the debut of Giesecke’s career, it was the biography of the historian that I was first and foremost trying to find. Furthermore, in his possession was the cover of librarian Francesco Cerroti (1806-1887)’s book *Lettere e memorie autografe ed inedite di artisti tratte dai*

notice by his numerous texts and drafts, yet a lot of his research remains unpublished.

Although he did not return to Piranesi's work after his dissertation, and although he did not visit the Soviet Union, the importance of his monograph in *Meister der Grafik* and his influence on Eisenstein cannot be overlooked.

I start by presenting an overview of the monograph for clarity and accuracy reasons, and then proceed to surveying and demarcating the flow of concepts between Giesecke and the film director, shedding light on where they intersect and on the ways in which their ideas diverge.

In his monograph on Piranesi *Meister der Grafik: Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, Albert Giesecke²⁹⁴'s first chapter reviews his research topic's state of the art and studies Piranesi's entire body of work, which is scattered around Europe, and gathers biographical material about the artist, exposed in his second chapter "Biographical Outline". The fourth chapter titled "The Beginnings of the Etchings" is of significance for my research as it dedicates an in-depth analysis to the Carceri series whose main ideas I present.

Wanting to periodicize the Carceri series, Giesecke calls their first edition of the 1740s "Urcarceri" and attempts to

manoscritti della Corsiniana, For Cerrotti's full biography, see:
[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-cerrotti_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-cerrotti_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

²⁹⁴ In Henri Focillon's (1881-1943) 1918 monograph on Piranesi, Albert Giesecke is mentioned only once in a footnote referencing a museum catalog from Dresden containing prints by Piranesi. Focillon writes that the prints were reproduced by Giesecke. Focillon also mentions Giesecke in the bibliography section in the category of "Reproductions".

highlight the differences in the revisions (Überarbeitung) that Piranesi later executed in the second edition of the 1760s, both on the level of technique and on the level of representation: In terms of technique, while Piranesi sketched the first edition “at a great speed and as if with a feather”²⁹⁵ as an expression of a demonic temperament (dämonischen Temperaments), the art historian notices that the artist drew over the initial lines to strengthen them, introducing diagonals and well-weighted uses of black, white, and gray tones in order to accentuate the shadows on the surface of the image in the second edition²⁹⁶. He concludes that Piranesi’s tampering with the composition pushes the boundaries of the medium he uses and infuses the etching with the expressive pictorial qualities (im höchsten Sinne malerisch)²⁹⁷, to the point of changing their medium into painting, stating that “In a word, sketches have become paintings”²⁹⁸ (Mit einem Wort: aus Skizzen sind Gemälde geworden.).

In terms of representation, Giesecke first examines the relationship of the revised Carceri to their frame, seeing in their width and format an impression of emptiness (Eindruck der Leere), regardless of which they maintain a sense of unity of the surface (Geschlossenheit in der Fläche angelegt), that distinguishes itself from the edges of the frame which seem to dissolve (nach dem Bildrand zu aufgelöst erscheinen)²⁹⁹. Most

295 Giesecke, *Meister*, 77. (sind sehr flott hingestrichen, wie man einen Entwurf mit der Feder rasch skizziert.)

296 Giesecke, *Meister*, 78. (Piranesi hat sich dann damit begnügt, durch Nachziehen (oder Nachätzen) die Linien zu verstärken und die Schattenpartien auch durch Einfügen neuer Linien zu vertiefen (die Zusätze scheinen doch wohl mit der kalten Nadel ausgeführt zu sein, wie es technisch am bequemsten war (...)) Die Bildfläche ist nun gegliedert durch gleichmäßig abgewogene Gegensätze von Schwarz und Weiß und Zwischentöne).

297 Giesecke, *Meister*, 78.

298 Giesecke, *Meister*, 78.

299 Giesecke, *Meister*, 77.

significantly, the compositional alterations in the later Carceri, especially its emphasis on diagonals, engenders what Giesecke calls a “deep movement” (Durch die Diagonalstellung der Fluchten im Bilde (...) wird die *Tiefenbewegung* besonders verstärkt)³⁰⁰.

The changes in etching technique and representation leads Giesecke to theorize about what Piranesi supposedly wanted the viewer to experience by looking at Carceri and his direction of our gaze when beholding his artwork. His prisons are a space meant to trap the eye in a fantasy and not for the mind to rationally analyze. Their aim is to evoke an impression of confusion of the senses, of vertigo and of horror: “Er (Piranesi) will das Auge, noch mehr die Phantasie beschäftigen und nicht den Verstand, ja es scheint in manchen Fällen fast, als wollte er einene sinnverwirrenden Eindruck hervorrufen. Wer sich in solche Räume (....) entgegengetreten, hindeindenkt, den muss ein Schwindel ergreifen, ein Grauen.”³⁰¹

But Giesecke does not establish a direct link between the experience of the viewer (fantasy, rational analysis or whatever it may be) and Carceri specifically being painterly. The experience of the artwork remains for him more the intention of the artist and less the fruit of the representation.

18. Intersections between Giesecke and Eisenstein

The same chapter also opens up with the following consideration about the transformation of Piranesi’s biography “we could say that Piranesi is not one etcher, but in fact much

300Giesecke, *Meister*, 78. (my emphasis)

301Giesecke, *Meister*, 79.

more, he has different facets to himself, different ways of drawings, of painting, and of seeing³⁰²”, which is reminiscent of Eisenstein’s quote about his interest in the personal changes in the artist’s biography from “archaeologist to artist, from scholar to poet, from investigator to visionary”³⁰³.

Giesecke then draws a minor similarity between the dungeon and the architecture depicted in the *Carcere Oscuro* (1743) and Daniel Marot³⁰⁴’s (1661-1752) *Prison d’Amadis* (1702), writing that: “wir erinnern uns, schon einmal im Werke Piranesi einem Kerker begegnet zu sein, jener ‘Carcere Oscuro’, die auf Marots *Prison d’Amadis* zurückging”³⁰⁵, but without further analysis or explanation of the relation between the two artists. But Eisenstein at this point does not mention the historian, neither in his article nor in a footnote to the citation, and both writers do not elaborate on possible deeper similarities between the artworks: “It (*Carcere Oscuro*) is thought to have been created under the influence of the etching “*Prison d’Amadis*” of Daniel Marot. It far surpasses the prototype. And it is dated 1743”, writes Eisenstein.

After having read both *Meister der Grafik* and *Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Form*, I notice that certain ideas have migrated from the first text to the second. Given the length and depth of Giesecke’s monograph and the disorganization of Eisenstein’s article, I arrange these conceptual meeting grounds for more coherence and precision as such: Firstly, the use of the term

302 Giesecke, *Meister*, 10. (verschiedene Arten zu zeichnen, zu malen, überhaupt zu sehen).

303 Eisenstein, “El Greco”, 122. (Eisenstein’s text on El Greco in *Non-Indifferent Nature* contains a paragraph extending itself to its text on Piranesi, which is omitted from other reproductions of the El Greco text as well as from the Piranesi article).

304 Daniel Marot: French furniture designer, engraver and architect of the late Baroque (Louis XIV) style.

305 Giesecke, *Meister*, 76.

“Urcarceri”. Secondly, notions of movement and frame. Thirdly, the references to literary sources.

18.1. *Carceri* and “Urcarceri”

Eisenstein calls the early editions of *Carceri* “Urcarceri”³⁰⁶ and confirms that such a category comes from Albert Giesecke, adding that “Urcarceri” also refers to Goethe’s *Urfaust*³⁰⁷: “Giesecke calls them, and correctly so, imitating Goethe’s *Ur-Faust*-the “*Ur-Carceri*.” (The earliest and original *Faust* is the first state of *Faust*; the earliest and original *Prisons* is the first state of the *Prisons* series.) Because in the case of Goethe, at the same time as the *Ur-Faust* (1770-1775), comes the *Faust* proper (1770-1806) in its place, and in its place, the second state of *Faust* (1773-1832).”³⁰⁸

Giesecke himself makes no such a reference to Goethe, nor does he explain his own choice of terminology. Eisenstein’s association of *Urcarceri* to *Urfaust* remains his own contribution but he does not weave a more intimate comparison between the artist and his contemporary German author³⁰⁹.

306Eisenstein, “Piranesi”, 93.

307 *Urfaust*: Preparatory material for the later theater work of Goethe’s *Faust*, written between 1772-1775, written mainly in prose and changed later into poetry.

308Eisenstein, “Piranesi”, 93.

309 Neither specify that Goethe has not cited the *Carceri* series but rather came to know Rome through Piranesi’s *Vedute* and was disappointed when visiting the city, which according to him, does not measure up to Piranesi’s grandiose work. See: Richard Wendort, “Piranesi’s Double Ruin,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34, no. 3 (2001), 161.

Consequently, linking Urcaceri and Urfaust is not conducive to a better understanding of either artwork and seems to me to have risen out of linguistic similarities due to the prefix “Ur”, meaning “basic”, “early”, or “primitive”. It does imply however, that Eisenstein borrowed Urcarceri from Giesecke as a category to organize Piranesi’s work and to distinguish between his first etchings in opposition to his later and more developed oeuvres constituting the second edition of the prison series, since the subject of Eisenstein’s analysis is in fact “The Dark Prison” from *Prima Parte* and mainly the second version of *Carcere with Staircase*.

Eisenstein also finds that the second Carceri has a more profound effect on the viewer beholding it than its earlier version. He briefly mentions the technical changes which Giesecke elaborated, writing that:

“In place of the first state of the Prisons, fifteen to twenty years later there appears the second state, which is unchanged in composition but redrawn and retouched and from the technical point of view of “etchings”, is unimproved; but from the point of view of figurative ecstatic revelation is even more *profound* and graphic. And this is followed by the third state of the Prisons, the inner self-explosion.”³¹⁰

Beyond the use of terminologies of Carceri and Urcarceri serving to periodicize Piranesi’s work for both authors, the impact of the second version of *Carcere with Staircase* constitutes a more developed common ground linking Giesecke and Eisenstein’s interest in the movement within it and its relationship to their frames.

18.2. Movement and Frame

³¹⁰Eisenstein, “Piranesi”, 93-94 (my emphasis).

Eisenstein predicates that the ecstatic nature of the second version of *Carcere* results from a montage animating it that juxtaposes conflicting scales and spaces without jeopardizing its concreteness. This montage is “the madness [which] consists only in the piling up, in the juxtapositions which explode the very foundation of the objects’ customary “possibility”, a madness which groups objects into a system of arches which “go out of themselves” in sequence, ejecting new arches from their bowels; a system of staircases exploding in a flight of new passages of staircases; a system of vaults which continue their leaps from each other into eternity.”³¹¹ Eisenstein insists on montage’s capability of making a static image dynamic, which Giesecke describes in the form of a “deep movement”(tiefenbewegung). By theorizing that the more Piranesi revises and edits his *Carcerei* the more the emotional charge increases over time from mere drama to ecstasy, heightening the power of the image with it³¹², I find that Eisenstein separates his work from Giesecke’s. For the latter, “deep movement” can be found exclusively in the revised edition of *Carceri* and not in the process of transformation of the first edition *into* the second the way the director would have it.

Briefly put, Giesecke sees movement as the end result and in the pinnacle of Piranesi’s work; the second *Carcere*, whereas Eisenstein sees movement in the act of repetition and of transformation from the first to the second.

Furthermore, the director briefly quotes Giesecke directly in regards to the luminous and airy perspectives and Venetian light present in the images: “It is in just this spirit, for example, that Giesecke writes about this etching (The Dark

311Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 94.

312Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 94.

Prison) in his work on Piranesi³¹³: The etching *Carcere Oscuro* is daring and yet restrained (...) The luminous and airy perspectives go even farther here... (compared to the other etchings of the series) a soft, silvery light, so much loved by the Venetians, streams down from above into this airy chamber and is lost in the gloomy distance."³¹⁴

But although Giesecke saw in this light the expansion of the etching towards a new painterly quality, Eisenstein still relates the artwork exclusively to cinema. He also distinguishes himself from Giesecke by not mentioning the emptiness in Piranesi's composition, but aligns himself to Giesecke anew by focusing on the idea that the second edition of *Carceri* maintains a sense of unity. What Giesecke deems as "Geschlossenheit in der Flasche"³¹⁵ (unity of surface), Eisenstein thinks of as "concreteness", formulated as such: "In the *Carcere Oscuro* the concreteness is retained while the means of representation "fly apart"(...) The concrete reality of perspective, the real representational quality of the objects themselves is not destroyed anywhere"³¹⁶. And without this concreteness, which is essential for the dynamism of a cinematic artwork, the spectator's eye cannot reclaim this very depicted movement in order for it to become agitated and moved.

It is essential to highlight that Eisenstein's originality lies in his cinematic interpretation of *Carcere with Staircase* and in his theorization that the viewer experiences this artwork as a film, through persistence of vision which juxtaposes the representation of all conflicting architectural elements into one image, the same way a film works in the mind of the audience. His descriptive analysis of a possible path for the eye to take when beholding the

313The following quote is by Giesecke

314Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 86-87. (in Italics are my inserts)

315Giesecke, *Meister*, 77.

316Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 94.

second edition of *Carcere* is substantially more detailed and engaging than Giesecke's. Eisenstein creatively substitutes the historian's ambiguous mention of the beholder's "horror" (ein Grauen) and "vertigo" (ein Schwindel)³¹⁷ with a cinematic hurricane in which compositional contents are, in Eisenstein's words: "all swept up by the powerful hurricane as though they (architectural elements within the engraving) resound from the etching which has lost its self-enclosed quality and calm in the name of a frenzied uproar."³¹⁸

Another meeting grounds between the two writers, after the representation and the frame, is Eisenstein's use of Giesecke's references to the English reception of Piranesi. I start by extracting this citations out of Eisenstein's text, then I confront them with Giesecke's, and lastly mark the diverging conclusions that they both drew from the same sources.

18.3. Literary interpretations of Carceri

Analyzed in Giesecke's monograph and scattered throughout Eisenstein's article, are readings of *Carceri* by Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859)³¹⁹ and his quotations of

³¹⁷Giesecke, *Meister*, 79.

³¹⁸Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 89.

³¹⁹Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859) was an English essayist, best known for his autobiograpy *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* in which he mentions Piranesi.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)³²⁰, which I feature side by side in my analysis.

Eisenstein states that “some interpret the Carceri as visions of the delirium of an archaeologist”³²¹, while others theorize that Piranesi was plagued with “persecution mania”³²². As an example, he employs an excerpt of De Quincey’s *Confession of an English Opium Eater* (1821) in which the author speaks of similarities between his own delirium while under the influence of drugs and Piranesi’s prisons which he interprets as the etcher’s own personal nightmares.

Below is an excerpt of Eisenstein’s hyper-referential text intercepted by quotes and his own remarks:

“De Quincey writes about the vision of similar architectural images found in states of exaltation and ecstasy in connection with . . . opium (*Confessions of an English Opium-eater*, 1821). (He calls his own addiction to opium a sickness. *Adds Eisenstein*).

(*Here begins Eisenstein’s quote of de Quincey with a reference to the book he extracted it from at the end*) “In the early stage of my malady, the splendours of my dreams were indeed chiefly architectural: and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds. (De Quincey, *Confessions*, ed. Richard Garnett [New York: White and Allen, 1885], p. 135).

Later he [de Quincey] quotes [William] Wordsworth, “a passage which describes, as an appearance actually beheld in the clouds, what in many of its circumstances I saw frequently in

320 Samuel Coleridge was an English poet, literary critic and philosopher who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets. He wrote about Piranesi in his *Notebooks* (1819-1826).

321 Eisenstein, “Piranesi”, 92.

322 Eisenstein, “Piranesi”, 92.

sleep" (p. 135). In the same excerpt he (*either de Quincey or Wordsworth*) pauses at the episode of the uninterrupted flow of architectural ensembles that piled up like thunder clouds: "the sublime circumstance-'battlements that on their restless fronts bore stars' might have been copied from my architectural dreams, for it often occurred."

What has already been said above would have been enough to compare Piranesi's amazing architectural visions, which float into each other in terms of not only the uniqueness of their structure, but even their figurative system, to the reflection in concrete forms of the fantastic architecture of the author's ecstatic states.

However this is also confirmed by the fact the De Quincey actually uses Piranesi's own *Carceri* as the most precise correspondence to those architectural visions that capture him in states of exaltation under the influence of opium:

"Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's *Antiquities of Rome*, Mr. Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his *Dreams*, and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever: Some of them (I describe only from memory of Mr. Coleridge's account) representing vast Gothic halls: on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, etc. , etc. , expressive of enormous power put forth, and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself: follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it come to a sudden abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below.

Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, you suppose, at least, that his labours must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher: on which again Piranesi is perceived, but this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld: and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labours: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall. - With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction -did my architecture proceed in dreams" (p. 133)³²³.

We must not be disturbed by factual impreciseness of petty details. The Carceri are called Dreams."³²⁴

In this long excerpt, Eisenstein cites in this order: De Quincey, a quote of Wordsworth by de Quincey, adds his own idea, moves on to another long passage from de Quincey's *Confessions* in which Coleridge is mentioned, and then draws the conclusion that Carceri are called "Dreams" according to the aforementioned sources.

Giesecke and Eisenstein share the same literary inspirations. I expound on their meeting grounds with the following question in mind: Knowing that they both rely on the same authors, are Eisenstein and Giesecke's conclusions different from each other or did the director merely borrow the historian's sources?

To answer this question, I zoom in more closely on Giesecke's monograph. His focus is on the reception of the Carceri by their contemporaries and his aim is to confront his art historical research with the literary writings that are almost

323 The is a quote is by De Quincey.

324Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 100-101. (in Italics are my inserts)

exclusively invested in the poetic meaning of the artwork at the expense of its historicity. As an example, he points out Coleridge's misinterpretation of the etchings and his confusion as to their production date:

"Lastly, Arthur Samuel, who quotes some intellectual remarks of older English authors (in his Piranesi, p.114-128), has dealt extensively with the Carceri. He was mainly concerned with their interpretation/explanation (Deutung). But he would not have strayed in all sorts of ways, had he clarified the origin of the Carceri. Erroneous (irrtümlich) is his opinion that the two editions he calls states were made in the same year (1750)."³²⁵ Afterwards, Giesecke writes a sentence that is present in Eisenstein's text in which he claims that Coleridge gave Carceri the title of "dreams": "Im Anschluß an eine Äußerung Coleridges (...) nennt er die Carceri Piranesis Träume."³²⁶ "It mirrors the last line in the director's long quote: "The Carceri are called Dreams."³²⁷

Giesecke's critique of Coleridge is sharp. He judges the author's writings as too literary and not in the spirit of Piranesi, but rather a reference to Coleridge himself. Giesecke sees the same approach in de Quincey's *Confessions of an*

325 Giesecke, *Meister*, 79-80. "Zuletzt hat sich Arthur Samuel, der einige geistvolle Äußerungen älterer englischer Autoren zitiert (in seinem 'Piranesi' S.114-128) eingehend mit den Carceri beschäftigt. Es war ihm dabei hauptsächlich um ihre Deutung zu tun. Er würde sich aber nicht in allerlei Spintisieren verirrt haben, wenn er sich die Entstehung der Carceri klar gemacht hätte. Irrtümlich ist zunächst seine Meinung, dass die beiden Auflagen, die er Zustände (states) nennt, im gleichen Jahre (1750) entstanden seien)."

326 Giesecke, *Meister*, 80.

327 Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 101.

Opium Eater, writing that: “Diese Deutung ist vielmehr durch und durch literarisch (ganz und gar nicht im Geiste Piranesis, der wohl ein Phantast, aber kein Dichter war), auch geht es sie auf einene Schriftsteller zurück, auf Coleridge. Sie wird uns mitgeteilt in Thomas de Quinceys Confessions of an Opium Eater).”³²⁸

For his conclusion, Giesecke sheds light on problematic areas in this literary reading: Firstly, he finds that the opinions of de Quincey and Coleridge according to whom Piranesi, sick with fever like the drugged de Quincey himself, depicted the injustice of incarceration as punishment, to be too profound (tiefsinnyng) in the worst sense of the word. As a counter-argument, he points out that Piranesi was in the Spirit (Geist) of his own country and did not dwell in England where such questions around justice may have been of relevance³²⁹. Secondly, Giesecke sees in Carceri “too much of a painterly quality” (zuviel malerisches darin)³³⁰ which makes them an expression of another vision of the world (Weltanschauung) that transcends the limits of their original medium and goes beyond a strict literary reading. He adds that Carceri have less to do with imprisonment and more to do with an opposition between the feeling of the infinity of the outer space and the feeling of the finiteness of the architectural space: “das Gefühl der Unendlichkeit des Weltraums mit dem Gegengefühl der Endlichkeit der architektonischen Raumes”.³³¹

As for Eisenstein, not only did he rely on the same textual source as Giesecke to present an example of the English tradition’s interest in Piranesi through Coleridge and de Quincey’s *Confessions*, but he even used the exact same quote by De Quincey as the one present in the monograph. In fact,

328Giesecke, *Meister*, 81.

329Giesecke, *Meister*, 82.

330Giesecke, *Meister*, 82.

331Giesecke, *Meister*, 82.

Giesecke presents the reader with a long excerpt of the German translation of de Quincey by Arthur and Hedda Möller-Bruck, published in Berlin 1902 in the second footnote on the same page 81 in the monograph³³², which Eisenstein copies, only in English instead of German³³³.

332 The footnote reads: "Viele Jahre vorher, als ich einmal in Piranesi's "römischen Altertümern" blätterte, berschrieb mir Coleridge, der bei mir stand, eine paar Blätter dieses Künstlers, die er seine "Träume" genannt, und die seine eigenen Visionen während eines Fieberdeliriums erzählen. Einige von ihnen, ich erzähle nach Coleridge's Worten aus dem Gedächtnis, stellten weite gotische Hallen dar, auf deren Boden alle Arten von Maschinen, Rädern, Kabeln, Rollen, Hebeln, Geschossen usw.usw. Aufgestellt waren, alles Mögliche, was vorwärtstreibende Kraft, besieften Widerstand ausdrückt. An den Seiten der Wand kroch eine Treppe empor. Und auf ihr sich hinauf-schleppend, sah man Piranesi selbst. Folgte man der Treppe ein wenig weiter, so nahm sie plötzlich ein Ende. Kein Geländer war da, und der Mensch, der diese Stelle erreicht hatte, konnte keinen Schritt mehr vorwärts machen. Nur der Sprung in die Tiefe da unten stand ihm offen. Wie es nun auch dem armen Piranesi ergangen sein mag, man vermutet jedenfalls, daß hier seine Anstrengung ein Ende gefunden. Doch erhebe deine Augen und du siehst eine zweite, noch höhere Treppenflucht und wieder erblickst du Piranesi, der diesmal jedoch ganz nahe am Abgrunde steht; und wieder hebe deine Augen und eine noch luftigere Treppenflucht tut sich auf und wieder quält sich Piranesi hinauf und so geht es weiter, bis die unvollendete Treppe und Piranesi sich in der Finsternis verlieren, die von oben auf die Halle drückt."(See: Giesecke, *Meister*, 81).

333 Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's *Antiquities of Rome*, Mr. Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his *Dreams*, and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever:

Generally, from Giesecke, Eisenstein reused the notion of “deep movement”, reading the dynamism embedded in Piranesi’s second edition of *Carceri* from the viewpoint of the movement that is best known to him; movement created by montage. Throughout his article, he attempts to decipher its operating method. He relied on his separation between *Carceri* and *Urcarceri* as a tool to help organize the Italian artist’s numerous artworks and make his analysis clearer and on literary sources to display his erudition. Nevertheless, he also borrowed some loose notions about the representation of movement and its relationship to the frame along with its impact on the viewer. Through his use of cinematic dispositifs and his investment in the potential cinematic eye movement of the audience, he dissects the etchings as finely as possible to unearth an underlying logic to the disposition of their elements and finds cinema at their very nucleus. This extremely refined look that is

Some of them (I describe only from memory of Mr. Coleridge's account) representing vast Gothic halls: on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, etc. , etc. , expressive of enormous power put forth, and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself: follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it come to a sudden abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, you suppose, at least, that his labours must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher: on which again Piranesi is perceived, but this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld: and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labours: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall. - With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction -did my architecture proceed in dreams". (See: Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 100-101).

simultaneously microscopic and anachronistic is where his bravest contribution lies.

My exegesis in the first part of my thesis set Eisenstein's texts in the context of his personal theoretical development unearthed his use of cinematic montage to extract specific compositional qualities in artworks which lend themselves to cinema. For the second part of my dissertation, I went deeper into the art historical sources that he relied on.

More generally, Eisenstein's art historical method relies on the following factors:

Firstly, the creation of a dialog serving to historicize his quest for cinematic compositional factors. Same as Eisenstein opposed Kehrer to Willumsen regarding the spiritual quality of *Storm over Toledo*, he also opposed Charcot to Bell regarding the reason behind the depiction of Saint Nilus's arms. His opinion emerges as a third voice speaking for cinema, integrating its representational problems in a historical tradition sustained by expert opinions. This approach is restricted to El Greco.

Secondly, the re-purposing of art historical ideas for the sake of cinema. Along those debates, Eisenstein reuses Kehrer's metaphysical approach to El Greco to predicate the possibility of cinema's subjective expression as well as Charcot's identification of hysterical symptoms in Nilus to make a claim about the nuances of ecstasy in images. He likewise turns around Giesecke's positioning of *Carceri* at the juncture of etching and painting by considering them rather as cinematic etchings.

Thirdly, and more specifically in the case of Kehrer, Eisenstein uses his writings to reinterpret his own directorial

practice when speedily analyzing *The General Line* through *The Martyrdom's* use of the cadre introductif. Similarly, he asserts Piranesi's impact on set design by stating that Carceri's motif of the repeating staircases was a source of inspiration for his staging of the scene with Alexander Kerensky³³⁴ ascending the stairs³³⁵ as a parody in his film *October* (1928)³³⁶. This parody of Kerensky in the movie commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution is the opposite of what Piranesi attempts to transmit in his artworks. Instead of the etcher's use of repetition in a way that enables the expression of Pathos in the artwork, Eisenstein employs the exact same method, repetition, to humorously attack those hindering the emergence of the Soviet Union. They illustratively keep going up, thus depicting Kerensky and his friends' caricaturized desire to ascend in politics. Since it is not clear when Eisenstein first got to know Piranesi, I cannot confirm if the artist was indeed an inspirational source for his films or if Eisenstein, same as with El Greco and *The General Line*, which I previously analyzed, reinterpreted his own cinema through other artworks after having already finished his movie.

Furthermore, Eisenstein uses the cinematic lexicon of "cadre introductive" to describe how El Greco dealt with the relationship between foreground and background; by repeating the figures to better guide the viewer's eye. Consequently, by making the painterly introductory frame cinematic as well,

334 Alexander Kerensky (1881-1970) was a Russian lawyer and politician who served as the Minister of Justice in the newly formed Russian Provisional Government, as Minister of War, and second Minister-Chairman of the between July and November 1917. Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution overthrew his government.

335 "October 1927 Ten Days That Shook the World Kerensky Sequence," *YouTube*, March 28, 2010, posted November 2, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWWDI3_8iOM.

336 Eisenstein, "Piranesi", 103.

Eisenstein makes out of both painting and cinema into media which are preoccupied with the same representational questions.

My analysis has also hopefully elucidated, when applicable, Eisenstein's will to align himself to certain writers and to contradict others, helping him make his own views more singular and distinguished and strengthening his investment in the backward-looking face of Janus, as a counterpoint to its forward-looking cinematic face. My analysis of Hugo Kehrer, Jean-Martin Charcot, Giulio Ferrari, and Albert Giesecke aimed at determining the extent of their influence on Eisenstein, his debts as well as his originality in respect to them.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this work, I have specified my research question; to examine the role of Sergei Eisenstein in the history of the visual arts through four articles which I use as case studies: One on Valentin Serov, two on El Greco, and one on Giovanni Battista Piranesi. I analyze them in the first part of this dissertation, untangling their complexities and setting them at the juncture of Eisenstein's film theories, and art historical iconographic interpretations.

I have also exposed my theoretical model and the image guiding me: The face of the Roman god Janus which Eisenstein mentioned towards the end of his life as emblematic of his understanding of the arts: Janus's face looks forward to the future of cinema and looks back to the legacy of art history.

The aim of this approach was not only to examine the connection between artwork and cinematic interpretation, but also to show how Eisenstein appropriates artworks for the sake of his cinematic art history.

Moreover, in the second part of my dissertation, I weaved an even tighter bond between cinema and art history by initiating a new dialog between Eisenstein and his own art historical sources: Hugo Kehrer, Albert Giesecke, and Jean-Martin Charcot, proving that although Eisenstein's knowledge is hyperreferential and laden with quotes as Iampolsky explored, it nonetheless presents certain nuances. My examination of these writers' original texts as well as my archival research around Giesecke allowed me to determine the extent to which Eisenstein relied on their analyses and their methodologies to make his own claims more robust and original.

By showing how he re-purposed their ideas for the sake of his arguments regarding cinema, I prove that his approach to them went beyond mere quotations, testifying to a circulation of ideas regarding movement and representation from Western Europe to the Soviet Union.

Methodological shifts

By way of conclusion, I highlight the change in methodology in Eisenstein's texts on the visual arts:

Eisenstein approaches his cinematic painters in the same fashion: He starts with the feeling that comes over him when beholding an artwork (power, boredom, excitement), he then retraces the method of the artist (representation of light, of space, of bodies), he finally exposes the cinematic traits (how all these elements come together or not).

In my view, Eisenstein's discussion of Piranesi differs somewhat in terms of argumentation method from his previous texts on Serov and on El Greco, because the trajectory the artwork follows in order to reach a cinematic status is worth mentioning.

Indeed, Eisenstein delivers us an already-cinematic *Yermolova* that he unpacks to shed light on its powerful montage, but he never mentions a non-cinematic *Yermolova* which is transformed as a counterpoint, only comparing it in his postscript to Repin's portrait of Tolstoy, which is another painting altogether. Also, when tackling El Greco, he underscores a change from unecstatic to ecstatic, focusing on the transformation of *Expulsion* into *Resurrection*, two paintings with radically different themes. He begins to oppose artworks with the same theme when comparing *Views of Toledo* and *Storm over Toledo*, but mainly through comments on quotations from Willumsen and Kehr, proving that the first artwork is unecstatic, that the second one is. The same applies, to a lesser degree, to the swift study of El Greco's two versions of *Christ in the Olive Garden*³³⁷.

337 Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 83.

It is only with Piranesi that Eisenstein's argues that the artist willingly changed his compositional structure while maintaining the same theme, knowing that *The Dark Prison* and *Carcere with Staircase* in both its variations, represent incarceration. He assumes that the reason behind these changes is Piranesi's desire to reach a higher level of inner expressiveness which his initial *Carceri* and his previous work forbade him due to their non-cinematic disposition.

This leads me to posit that over time, the intentionality of the artist increased in importance for Eisenstein, and that the conscious orchestration of visual elements became more essential to him than during the 1930s³³⁸. The affirmation of the artist's will itself affirms the cinematic traits of his/her production.

Representational Integrity

This cinematic disposition is made possible by a transversal concept crossing all of Eisenstein's texts on the visual arts: The unity of the body.

Throughout the texts I studied, Eisenstein insists on the unity of the depicted body: He finds it important for Serov's *Yermolova* to contain within one figure contradictory dynamic representations aligned to set-ups of the eye of the observer. He describes this wholeness as being "without a departure from realistic depiction" and as a form of "representational integrity"³³⁹.

He deems it necessary for El Greco's *Storm over Toledo* to have used the overarching principle of the storm to embrace the incongruous representations of the city, seen from impossible perspectives and not spread them out the way its counterpart *View and Plan of Toledo* had done, thus allowing the

338 Eisenstein wrote that he thinks Serov "unconsciously" designed his *Yermolova*, yet El Greco and Piranesi consciously installed cinema in their artworks.

339 Eisenstein, "*Yermolova*", 96.

painting to function like an autoportrait with "the projection of states of his [El Greco's] own soul into *tangible forms* of threatening landscapes (Storm over Toledo)." ³⁴⁰ Also, he deems it crucial that Piranesi's *Carcere with Staircase* should retain its sense of concreteness, allowing it to offer the pretense of its architectural elements work logically while it hurls the viewer's eye into various directions, by using the words "concreteness", "stony concreteness", "realistic in themselves", "the representational quality of objects" ³⁴¹, and "concrete forms" ³⁴².

Having noticed this major requirement for Eisenstein to consider an artwork cinematic, I explore the functions this wholeness of the body plays in his art history: Discursive, mystifying, and impossible representation.

Discursive: The paintings which Eisenstein examines resist being read as cinematic upon first glance. They do not appear to be folding in them a cinematic montage facilitated by compositional properties because they mask the process needed for their own generation. By retaining their figurativeness, they block a quick reading or understanding of their true cinematic nature, tricking the viewer into seeing them at face value, as static paintings or etchings, and thus not seeing their montage.

The way Eisenstein writes his texts testifies to this: His "Yermolova" and "El Greco y el Cine" present minor disputes with other theorists by way of digressions, who failed to see the workings of cinema in the considered artwork.

340 Sergei Eisenstein, "The Lion in Old Age," in: *Nonindifferent Nature*, ed. Herbert Marshall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 110. (my emphasis)

341 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 94.

342 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 100.

Figurativeness tricked Axionov into seeing "nothing special"³⁴³ in the picture on the grounds of it resembling Yermolova in real life, and Willumsen into relegating El Greco's repetitions of his paintings such as the *Expulsion* series to the tradition of oriental icon-making³⁴⁴, and his use of montage in *Storm over Toledo* to a narrative strategy³⁴⁵.

Unlike them, Eisenstein does not stop at the surface of the image, but penetrates it deeper to discover within it the factors responsible for its power, hidden in the image itself. He uses wholeness as a form of rhetoric to distinguish himself at times from other writers because he "sees more" than them with his X-Ray eyes penetrating this first layer, seeing montage at the heart of the artwork. It takes a montage-oriented film director to see through the figurativeness of a montage-using painter. Therefore, figurativeness plays a contradictory role that simultaneously guarantees the cinematic nature of the painting but it also (momentarily) eclipses the cinematic interpretation.

Mystifying: When a painted body retains its "representational integrity", it conceals the cinematic device operating within it. This mystification allows for its cinematic compositional factors to carry out their artistic effectiveness of moving the audience while remaining unseen. The mirror and the light in *Yermolova discreetly* allow the conflicting representations to converge into one image, the change in theme and format *gently* transform the boring *Expulsion* into the dynamic *Resurrection*.

Should an image be split up, displaying its inner workings such as *View and Plan of Toledo* which disassembles the various representations of the city from different points of views, refusing to unite them, then it cannot be cinematic. Revealing the device of a cinematic operation makes it ineffective, while

343 Eisenstein, "Yermolova", 82

344 Eisenstein, "El greco y el cine", 79.

345 Ibid., 71.

mystifying the device retains the magic of the operation in both film and painting³⁴⁶.

Impossible representation: By claiming that the wholeness of the body hides cinematic movement, which in turn inspires its audience, Eisenstein asks for impossible views upon a body in the same moment.

At the heart of his writings on the visual arts is the desire to redeem the viewer of the limits of their perception and the fetters of their bodies, allowing them to enjoy a visual experience previously impossible to them because it combines contradictory representations in one single instant: Yermolova shot from above *and* Yermolova shot from below, Toledo seen from near *and* Toledo seen from far, *Carcere with Staircase* coming towards the viewer *and* *Carcere with Staircase* moving away from the viewer, all within a single image. This impossible representation is at the juncture of time and space, as one moment in time which envelops several conflicting representations in space, instead of being a sequential moments each with a different depiction.

Consequently, through these three functions, the wholeness of the body sustains simultaneous impossible movements within the same image, that are essential to the mystified and effective operation of cinema, only visible to a montage-knowing eye.

Scientific origins

346 See: Somaini, Antonio. n.d. "Cinematique, Cinematisme, and "the Urphanomen of Cinema". *Mouvement. Bewegung* / Hrsg. Von Andreas Beyer Und Guillaume Cassegrain. 203-216.

After having articulated the link between the "concreteness" of bodies and the persistence of vision, I return to the potential origins of such thoughts. Same as in the second part of my dissertation, I explored the circulation of ideas between Eisenstein and the art historians he cited, I now present the scientific basis of some aspects of his art history, which I ground in his research on physiology in the early 1920s. My chapter on Charcot's contribution to the director's ecstasy can be grouped alongside Uta Becher and Oksana Bulgakova's work (1988) on Eisenstein and German psychologists³⁴⁷, and Marie Rebecchi's (2017) study of his relationship to Jean Painlevé³⁴⁸. But while Eisenstein and art forms other than cinema has been of some interest to researchers, the ties that bind him to scientists has generated less enthusiasm, although it is crucial to acquiring a more completed picture of the network Eisenstein had woven between film, the visual arts, and theater, over decades.

At the biomechanics workshops of Vsevelod Meyerhold in the early 1920s which brought physiology to the stage, Eisenstein conceptualized for the first time the relationship between the body of the theater actor in his article "Expressive Movement", and later the film actor, both in relation to the audience. I argue in this conclusion that the fruits of his research about the body in biomechanical theater constitute an important source for his reflections on art history. More specifically, his engagement with physiology helped him conceptualize the two attributes necessary for a static artwork to be considered cinematic which I have just surveyed: the unity of the depicted body and the agitation of the eye of the spectator.

347Becher, Uta. Werkstattgedanken: Annelie Thorndike und Kollegen ; Eisenstein und die deutschen Psychologen. Berlin: Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen der DDR "Konrad Wolf", 1988.

348Rebecchi, Marie, "Sergei Eisenstein and Jean Painlevé: science is animation", in: "Eisenstein as modernist", ed. by Natalie Ryabchikova: Critical Quarterly, Volume 59, Issue 1, Wiley, 2017, 47-59.

Vsevolod Meyerhold's post-revolutionary biomechanics is a form of actor training that distinguishes itself from the work of his own teacher Constantin Stanislavski (1863-1938)³⁴⁹, whom he had criticized as early as 1907 on the grounds of not having included "physical culture as a basic subject in its theater schools"³⁵⁰. Stanislavski emphasized the importance of the stimulation of the actor's mind and memories in the generation of a truthful performance, that would incite the audience to contemplate a staged reality, recreating the historical style of a text³⁵¹. But Meyerhold, and later Eisenstein focused on movement and gymnastics³⁵², inversely locating the secret to artistic expression of their proletarian and anti-imperialist theater in the actor's body and not in his psyche. The body on stage can incite the audience to empathize or to act, and later in cinematic painting, the body

349 Constantin Stanislavski was a seminal Russian theater practitioner. He was widely recognized as an outstanding character actor and the many productions that he directed according to his Stanislavski system relying on the art of experiencing. It mobilizes the actor's conscious thought and will in order to activate other, less-controllable psychological processes—such as emotional experience and subconscious behavior—sympathetically and indirectly. In rehearsal, the actor searches for inner motives to justify action and the definition of what the character seeks to achieve at any given moment

350 Alma Law and Mel Gordon, introduction to *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia*, by Alma Law and Mel Gordon (New York, NY, United States: McFarland & Company, Incorporated Publishers, 1996), 24.

351 Alessia Cervini, introduction to *Sulla Biomechanica: Azione scenica e movimento*, by Sergei Eisenstein (Roma: Armando Editore, 2009), 10.

352 Richard Drain, *Twentieth Century Theatre: A Sourcebook* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1995), 93.

on canvas can move the audience's eye and unleash persistence of vision.

Meyerhold was preoccupied with scientific understandings of the body and taught not only comparisons between the arts, theater as a synthesis of all arts, physical training, the laws of movement and drawing, but he also included “scientific theoretical subjects” such as anatomy, physiology, and the psychology of emotions³⁵³, all of which are interests that Eisenstein would later retain. Although the theater director did not consistently write about biomechanics, his training method has reached us through the notes of his students. He assigned the task of drafting a theory of his work and creating a reliable text to Eisenstein in 1922, who said in one of his lectures: “Biomechanics is the very first step towards Expressive Movement. Also beyond that first step, which was basically not a very large one, Meyerhold himself never went. He remained within the limits of that special biomechanical gymnastics and he didn't take any further steps in the direction of a system of Expressive Movement.(...) Expressive Movement is that movement which proceeds according to organic rules of movement.”³⁵⁴

Eisenstein drew upon several sources to better understand traits in artworks that generate a strong impact upon the viewer. He began his investigation in theater, then moved to cinema, and then delved into art history.

In 1923, he presented his research results in the unpublished article “Expressive Movement” for an entry for a theater encyclopedia³⁵⁵ which he completed with the help of his

353 Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold*, 29.

354 Ibid., 206.

355 The theater encyclopedia is an aborted project.

friend Sergei Tretyakov, who had brought him numerous books from Europe and into the USSR the previous year³⁵⁶.

The conclusion they drew, which would form the basis of Eisenstein's later theories is that "expressive movement is a dialectical synthesis that arises from the conflict between a body's conscious, utilitarian aims and its unconscious, instinctive reflexes. Eisenstein dissociated expressive movement from Meyerhold's biomechanics in stressing the disjunctive and contradictory aspects of bodily reflexes and motions."³⁵⁷

He further stressed this disjunctive capacity some years later in "Biomechanics as a Control of Movement", stating that "Biomechanics teaches how to consciously break up movements into elements from which at any moment the actor can reconstruct or put together the movement he needs – a raccourci."³⁵⁸

Put in art historical terms, his analytical method when approaching the visual arts involves him breaking up the movement embedded in the paintings, drawing the elements constituting it and then putting everything back together in order to uncover montage working within it and making it move. He executed this operation by cutting up the various set-ups of *Yermolova*, transforming the repeated figures of El Greco's *Expulsion* and *Resurrection*, and making *Carcere with Staircase*'s architectural elements explode. So from the very start and even before editing his first film, Eisenstein consciously tore apart and organized visual elements in search of movement.

In "Expressive Movement", the authors state that Rudolf Bode's theories about expressive movement are "of

356 Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold*, 82.

357 James Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema, and History* (Urbana, IL, United States: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 30.

358 Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold*, 166.

exceptional interest"³⁵⁹, and under Bode's influence their Expressive Acting "integrated the actor's various skills in the physical. It provided also that actors should not only master physically difficult, and even dangerous skills, but that they should then be able to deform them, thus making them expressive."³⁶⁰ Eisenstein would repeat these ideas in "The Recoil" where he makes explicit that "All movements must be connected with each other. Between the recoils, the movements, and the following movements, there must be an organic connection."³⁶¹

So from early on, he stresses the importance of the unity of the figure in which the whole maintains an organic connection to its parts and does not display them as isolated components. This "representation integrity" and "concreteness" is the condition of the generation of movement, separating the use of montage from any other creative strategy, thanks to its distinct ability to excite the audience enough to partake in the director or painter's creative method. It also leads them to experience a great sensation of excitement and to confer upon their act of viewing an emotional dimension; same as Eisenstein experienced the inner power of a montage-based Yermolova, which a simple display of visual elements à la Repin cannot offer.

Consequently, this initial research which I hope to expand places at least one key aspect of Eisenstein's art history in dialog with scientists such as Rudolf Bode who was likewise preoccupied with discussions around rhythm and movement.

Persistence of Vision

359 Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold*, 173.

360 Robert Leach, *Theatre Studies: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2008), 106.

361 Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold*, 168.

If indeed the paintings and etchings are made up of several images maintaining their wholeness, how come the viewer beholds only one? A reason for the importance of this wholeness is its impact on persistence of vision which Eisenstein sees as helping to merge conflicting representations into one image.

Persistence of vision; which is the juxtaposition of static frames stimulates the perception of movement because the viewer's mind superimposes a strip on the one that comes after it, was the crux of his film theory. He wrote that: "For the idea (or sensation) of movement arises from the process of superimposing on the retained impression of the object's first position, a newly visible further position of the object."³⁶²

But it was not merely a theoretical preoccupation for him. It was likewise present in his film practice as a reflexive gesture, in the way the image itself was treated, often in the form of a double exposure. As Robert Robertson pointed out: "He (Eisenstein) takes the microcosmic level of the concept of persistence of vision and extrapolates it via the technique of double exposure to the macrocosmic level of film sequences, as well as audiovisual montage."³⁶³ For example, in *Strike* (1924) Eisenstein superimposes the images of workers with those of an accordion to stimulate the audience to imagine music back at a time when only silent film was available. This superimposition of the images acts as "a continuation of the effect of persistence of vision, the phenomenon which at the time was thought by many to make film possible."³⁶⁴

362Sergei Eisenstein, "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form," in: *Film Form; Essays in Film Theory*. ed.trans. Jay Leyda, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), 49.

363 Ibid., 141-142.

364Robert Robertson, *Eisenstein on the Audiovisual: The Montage of Music, Image and Sound in Cinema*, (New York : Tauris Academic Studies, 2009), 141.

I broaden Robertson's approach by having it embrace Eisenstein's art historical research which, as my analysis presented, was also traversed by the assumption that persistence of vision is at work in cinematic paintings, thus establishing a continuity of vision. Nevertheless, within Eisenstein's texts on these artworks, persistence of vision works differently in each artwork by conflicting with some of their unique aspects:

In the case of Serov's *Yermolova*: The juxtaposition of conflicting movements within her single image clashes with the immobility of the figure and the static nature of the medium. In it, persistence of vision superimposes all her set-ups and the eye moves according to a 180 degree curve which Eisenstein sketched: "What makes her portrait so expressive is the fact that we have before us in this picture the *simultaneous unity of monumental immobility* and a whole gamut of *dynamic movement* (...) It is also interesting to observe that the effect has been achieved without a departure from realistic depiction, which, despite everything, retains its representational integrity."³⁶⁵

Based on the portrait's immobility and the movement animating it, I predicate that the spectator's persistence of vision works the same way in *Yermolova* as in a double exposure photography, or better yet as a shot in a film when the latter has been paused; a freeze-frame: It looks still but it actually contains twenty-four frames per second.

As for El Greco's *Storm over Toledo*, persistence of vision joining all the views of the city into one impossible image results in an entrance into a spiritual space, representative of the painter himself: "The subjective, ecstatic dissolution of him [El Greco] in the apparently "objective" landscape – this is what makes his *Storm over Toledo* so striking and captivating."³⁶⁶

365 Ibid., 96.

366 Eisenstein, "El Greco", 120.

It is spiritual because it is constituted of elements apprehended independently and reunited in an arbitrary inexistent construction from a unique point of view, divorced from the need to provide information as to the location of the city. It is rather perfectly aligned to the inner necessity of the artist which guided his choice of composition, making him merge with his artwork. There is less conflict in this case and more absorption of El Greco himself.

In the case of Piranesi's *Carceri with Staircase*, all the violent movements pulling the picture in different directions which our eye tries to combine together while being interrupted by architectural elements, conflicts with the edges of the etching. The borders of the image can no longer contain the representations within it. Instead of being frozen, persistence of vision operating in the artwork unleashes a process of an unending explosion³⁶⁷.

Eisenstein seeks and finds artworks that push their audience to a higher level, bringing them to a state of ecstasy in order to free them of their bodily limitations, hence their experience of altered states when gazing upon cinematic artworks retaining their representational integrity: The viewer is frozen in time by *Yermolova*, spiritually transported by *Storm over Toledo*, and drifting into infinity thanks to *Carcere with Staircase*.

367 Sergei Eisenstein, "Piranesi, or The Fluidity of Forms", 104-105.

APPENDIX

The life and work of Albert Giesecke

In a gray-colored folder which looks rather brand new, the sticker Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg Deutsches Kunstarchiv bears the hand-written name of Albert Giesecke with the number "2536/794" below it, I found his typed four-page biography in German. The text featured smaller markings and corrections added in pencil, the most important one of them being the date of his death added to the top right corner of the first page: "*sign of the cross* Nov.1966". The document is not signed and did not feature the name of the writer. Judging by the type of paper and the typography, it looks to me as it were written in the 60s/70s. Therefore, since the estate of Giesecke entered the GNM in the 90s, this excludes the possibility of it

being drafted by an archivist, it could be that the text was his daughter's contribution.

Regardless of the author, I summarize Giesecke's detailed biography whose title in German reads "Lebenslauf und Bildungsgang des Kunstwissenschaftlers Dr. Phil. Albert Giesecke (Tod-Nov.1966)" and occasionally comment on it.

Biography and course of study of the art scientist Dr.Phil.
Albert Giesecke (died in Nov.1966).

Albert Giesecke was born on July 9th 1881 in Leipzig and was the son of the co-owner of the printing press and typography innovator "Schelter und Giesecke".

From 1902 to 1904, he studied law and economics at the Universities of Freiburg, Leipzig and Munich and attended art classes. In 1905, he graduated as a military officer from Grimma (Saxony), after which he decided to study philosophy, art history, and archeology. He also modeled medals, plaques, made portraits, painted and watercolored.

These artistic endeavors are missing from his archives in Nuremberg from what I could find.

Giesecke greatly expanded his knowledge and acquainted himself with collections of museums through several stays abroad. In 1906 he traveled to England, in 1907 to Italy, in 1908 to France, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden, in 1909 he spent half a year in Switzerland and Austria. He decided in 1911 to take his doctorate in Berlin.

Information about his travels are likewise not part of the estate I consulted.

His approach to art history was influenced by his teachers: Heinrich Wölflin, Karl Frey, Studniczka, Kekule

von Stradonitz and August Schmarsow, and soon after his doctorate, Giesecke joined the Prussian Museum Service and spent eight months at the East Asian Art Collection, then one year at the Prints' Cabinet, and then two months at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, also in Berlin. The Director General of the museum, Wilhelm von Bode, trained the young museum official for two years³⁶⁸, but refrained from hiring him due to lack of funds. Since Giesecke was offered a job in the editorship of the art journal 'Kunstwelt', which was re-founded in Berlin, he became an associate and editor of a series of dissertations on the arts until the magazine had to stop its publication a few months after the outbreak of the First World War.

During the war and afterwards, Giesecke continued his studies and conducted personal research into the work of Bernini, Brueghel and Dürer, earning his livelihood as a teacher. In 1919, he moved from Berlin to Leipzig and, at the request of his father in 1920, he entered the firm of "Schelter und Giesecke", in order to support him in his work in the field of writing, the management of printing and the making of art reproductions.

After the death of his father in 1930, the company was transformed into a stock corporation.

During this decade, he did not let his art studies rest, and lectured in art history at the Fichtehochschule Leipzig, at the Volkshochschule, at the Association of the History of the city of Leipzig, the German association, the Art Historical Society among others.

In the period between 1930 and 1936, he traveled to Italy and England in 1934 and he also held lectures on Asian art at the University of Leipzig at the East Asian Art Institute and the Japanese Institute, and was recognized as a connoisseur in this field by the institute leaders who often consulted with him. As a 45-year-old man, he began to learn Japanese and Chinese in

368 "two years" is added in pencil in the original manuscript.

order to improve his understanding of the countries and to read and translate inscriptions, texts, and artists' signatures.

From 1940-1941 he also worked as a catalog editor at Köhler & Volkmar and then for several insurance companies such as "Alte Leipziger" and "Leipziger Feuerversicherung". A year later, he went to Austria, and visited museums in Vienna, Graz and Klagenfurt.

From 1948 onwards, he worked as an art expert and guide in the evaluation of art objects of all kinds, especially of paintings and sculptures, graphics and East Asian art. In 1956, he spent four weeks in Holland and visited all the major museum collections and architectural monuments of the country. Above all, he was engaged in an intensive research on Rembrandt, as well as studies of Van Eyck, especially of the Ghent altar, which he was preoccupied with for years. He remained interested in Dürer for at least two decades and published extensively about him.

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